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Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 11 October 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: **Mr. Wolfe** .... **(Jamaica)**

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 106: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/62/84, A/62/126, A/62/127, A/C.3/62/L.2 and L.3)

Agenda item 107: International drug control (*continued*) (A/62/117)

1. **Mr. Giade** (Nigeria) said that despite consistent efforts to combat transnational organized crime and drug trafficking, the situation continued to threaten international security. The impact of drug abuse and trading on youth, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening diseases, quality of life and poverty was most alarming. In addition to current efforts to curb drug trafficking, technical assistance from the international community and bodies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was urgently needed to enhance the capacity of Member States, particularly in the areas of training and job creation.

2. The strengthening of international and regional coordination was crucial, notably in the West African subregion, which had become a hotspot for global drug trafficking. Affirming Nigeria's commitment to the global drug control system under the guidance and coordination of UNODC and his Government's confidence in international legislation on drug control, he called on United Nations Member States to fully implement those instruments.

3. The work of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), in cooperation with the international community, had empowered Nigeria to tackle the issue of international crime prevention and drug control, with a measure of success in narcotics control, drug reduction and anti-money-laundering mechanisms. However, Nigeria urgently needed international support and technical assistance, and he appealed to international partners to give further support to Government agencies in their attempt to stamp out drug trafficking, particularly of cannabis, in the West African subregion.

4. Vast resources had been spent on curbing the transit and export of drugs, and having applied itself diligently to fulfilling its international treaty obligations, Nigeria hoped that its partners would supplement those efforts by providing technical assistance, logistics support and training. He also wished to underscore the risk that the region might attract other illicit drugs, such as cocaine, if the drug war was not tackled head-on. It was crucial for the international community to address and pre-empt that threat.

5. Assistance to the West African Joint Operations (WAJO), established as a subregional cooperation entity, had waned in the previous two years. WAJO needed urgent support for training, logistics, funding and other forms of technical assistance. It was hoped that the international community would help Nigeria to meet that challenge and thereby forestall a major drug trafficking epidemic in the subregion.

6. He took the opportunity to renew Nigeria's full support and commitment to reaching the targets set at the twentieth special session of the United Nations General Assembly. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime needed sustainable and predictable funding in order to combat effectively the international drug menace. African countries had been deeply affected by reduced donor funding for drug control, a situation that had served as an incentive for drug traffickers. African countries, in particular those of West Africa, urgently needed financial assistance to build capacity in the areas of criminal justice, crime prevention and drug trafficking in order to ensure their long-term socio-economic development.

7. **Mr. Onischenko** (Ukraine) expressed concern about the threats to international stability posed by organized crime, human and drug trafficking and the various associated phenomena. Globalization had created an environment in which illicit drugs, crime and terrorism flowed easily across borders, hence the need for vigilance and the continued improvement of national, regional and international mechanisms for effective cooperation.

8. Ukraine believed that the main priorities set for the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and UNODC, the steps based on the progress review of the twentieth special session's target implementation, and the adoption of the UNODC medium-term strategy could meaningfully help countries face the challenges posed by the drug trade. Ukraine supported efforts to enhance international cooperation in combating transnational organized crime, and intended to remain an active participant in that regard.

9. The success of the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention

against Corruption would allow States to further develop a unified global approach and a coherent implementation strategy in tackling corruption. Expressing Ukraine's full support for the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking and the forum on the Global Initiative to be held in Vienna, he stressed the importance of existing legislation on crime, drugs and human trafficking, and urged States to comply with, and fully implement, the provisions of those instruments and the UNODC strategies and policies. Ukraine would continue to honour its obligations under the multilateral treaty regimes, and in that context, he called on international organizations to provide the necessary technical assistance to ensure their effective implementation.

10. In attempting to promote stable international and regional cooperation in crime prevention and criminal justice, international organizations should adopt additional measures that enhanced the exchange of information and lessons learned, and should provide further technical and expert assistance to help Member States strengthen their justice and crime prevention mechanisms. States should be encouraged to broaden practical contact among themselves, by regularly sharing their experiences in the production and use of specialized technology and equipment to counter organized crime. Success in that area depended on both the efficiency and professionalism of the law enforcement bodies of each State, the level of their international cooperation and on finding practical ways to eliminate the root causes of the phenomenon.

11. With regard to international drug control, he said Ukraine endorsed an integrated and comprehensive approach to tackling the illicit manufacture of drugs and drug trading, in order to prevent the diversion of substances used in the licit manufacture of pharmaceuticals, and highlighted the need for effective control and verification systems. Recognizing that illicit drug production and consumption were the result of low levels of social and economic development in many regions, he proposed that drug and crime prevention measures should be integrated into sustainable development strategies.

12. Since the prevention of drug abuse was a precondition to establishing a healthy and efficient society, Ukraine welcomed the measures taken by UNODC and its subsidiary bodies, in particular their assistance in resolving urgent drug-related issues. The increasing level of heroin production in Afghanistan was especially worrying to Ukraine, as countries in the region had become transit States for large volumes of heroin destined for Europe. The situation clearly illustrated the particular vulnerability of countries with economies in transition because of their geographic location. In that context, he welcomed the decision taken by five Central Asian countries, the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan, to establish a regional coordination centre to combat illicit drug trafficking and organized crime.

13. **Mr. Anzola Quinto** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that action to combat the global drug problem, in all its manifestations, was an area of priority for the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as a socialist State, both in terms of national security and from the human welfare perspective. Furthermore, Venezuela was committed to meeting the targeted objectives established under the Political Declaration adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly. Persistent efforts made by Venezuela, through its preventive and enforcement strategies and actions, had not only attracted the attention of such recognized bodies as the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), but had also borne tangible results. The volume of drug seizures, amounting to over 60 tons during the previous year, and significant arrests in recent months reflected the Government's firm commitment.

14. Venezuela endeavoured to improve its body of legislation in order to more effectively confront the drug problem, through reforms aimed at strengthening information systems and increasing penalties against traffickers. In addition, innovative draft laws on aircraft, the customs services, seized assets and the postal system were under consideration.

15. Although Venezuela was neither a producer nor a large-scale consumer of drugs, it had nevertheless become a major transit State for drugs destined for countries where they were in high demand. The Government firmly believed that action to combat drugs required joint cooperation between drug-producing and drug-consuming countries, based on the principle of shared responsibility. In that regard, Venezuela wished to highlight the particular problem of transit States and the need tc strengthen cooperation, particularly in the Caribbean region. UNODC had played an important role with respect to Venezuela,

which had benefited from technical assistance and specialized training of its law enforcement officials.

16. He stressed the need for a comprehensive and balanced approach to combating drugs, in accordance with the objectives and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, in particular the full respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Joint action against drugs must involve a two-pronged approach from the demand and supply perspectives. States must be committed to reducing demand, taking responsibility for drug addicts; from the supply standpoint, combating drug distribution should not jeopardize the survival of populations, particularly indigenous peoples, and their age-old traditions. It was time to acknowledge the long-standing errors that had been committed in combating drugs, and it was time to recognize the environmental damage caused by certain reduction policies, and their effects on the very existence and livelihood of vulnerable sectors of the population.

17. **Ms. Kafanabo** (Tanzania) said that the Government of Tanzania was profoundly concerned about the global drug problem and its negative impact on the country's development and poverty eradication efforts. The strategic position of Tanzania, bordering eight countries, six of which were landlocked, its good network of roads to neighbouring countries and its long stretch of coastline increased Tanzania's vulnerability to illicit drug trafficking. To a large extent Tanzania was a transit State. However, with increased enforcement in developed countries and in the countries of final destination, recent drug seizure statistics showed a sharp increase in the availability of illicit drugs in Tanzania, a trend that should be curbed before it escalated.

18. Cannabis was the most abused and trafficked drug in Tanzania, and its cultivation was on the rise. Cannabis production was more lucrative for poor farmers than traditional cash crops, which had fallen in value on the world market. The Government had launched a major campaign to sensitize local leaders and to carry out massive eradication operations and surveillance. However, such efforts alone could not guarantee a sustainable solution, and there was need to boost those efforts by seeking viable development programme alternatives, including crop substitution, in areas where cannabis was cultivated on a commercial scale. At the same time, the World Trade Organization Agreement on Agriculture should be expedited in order to ensure better terms for farmers.

19. Another area of concern to the Government was the vulnerability of young people to drug abuse and HIV infection. Advocacy programmes, including peer education, targeted youth in the hope of preventing them from becoming drug traffickers or users.

20. Successful measures had been adopted by the Government: drug control legislation had been strengthened, and special control units within law enforcement agencies had been set up and their officials trained. In addition, an inter-agency task force and awareness campaigns on the dangers posed by illicit drugs had been put into effect. The Government had also established a national plan of action and an inter-ministerial team to ensure the coherence of drug control programmes undertaken by the various stakeholders. However, the lack of resources to implement strategies and the inadequate capacity of law enforcement agencies to deal with the diversion of pharmaceutical products to illicit channels were major impediments. There was also inadequate capacity to counter the manufacture of illicit drugs, treat drug users, or effectively to address general drug abuse issues and HIV prevention. In that connection, she underscored the importance of securing international support to enable the Government to address the challenges ahead.

21. The Government of Tanzania acknowledged and endorsed the work of UNODC and called on the international community to continue its support to that body, especially through increased funding. Tanzania had vastly benefited from technical and financial support, but because of its vulnerability and the surge in illicit drug activity there was need for further support. Her delegation agreed with the suggestion made by the Executive Director of UNODC to the effect that drug control, crime deterrence and the prevention of terrorism could not be pursued in isolation. International judicial cooperation and coordination were crucial to ensuring peace, security, development and the rule of law.

22. **Ms. Eilon Shahar** (Israel) said that her delegation had acceded to a number of conventions and treaties regarding narcotic drugs and was fully committed to the Action Plan against Illicit Manufacture, Trafficking and Abuse of Amphetamine-

type Stimulants and their Precursors. Israel's national strategy to eliminate illicit drugs was based on several integrated approaches, including anti-trafficking legislation, youth education, drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation and information and advocacy. Those efforts had led to some successes. Israel's drug seizures of a variety of narcotics were the highest in the region, while drug addiction was relatively low when compared with other developed nations. Israel continued to combat the demand for ecstasy, LSD and heroine. The global increase in the use of cannabis also remained a cause for concern. With regard to enforcement, researchers in Israel were working to develop a method of detecting cannabis fields using remote aerial sensing. The relatively high rate of drug and alcohol abuse among Israel's migrant communities was a challenge for her Government. Israel had adapted its therapeutic and counselling programmes to the particular needs of migrants affected by drug and alcohol abuse. Other measures such as drug addiction hotlines in a number of languages catered to the needs of migrant populations.

23. Israel had enacted a law criminalizing trafficking in persons for the purpose of prostitution. In 2006, the legislation had been expanded to include slavery and forced labour. Under that legislation her Government was empowered to confiscate the assets of traffickers to fund a victim compensation programme. Israel also continued to work with other Governments to coordinate and implement anti-trafficking policies.

24. Drug trafficking also posed major strategic threats beyond the domestic sphere. Terrorist organizations, some with enormous global reach, used drug trafficking networks to finance their campaigns and move weapons. Israel faced the clear threat of drugs, terrorism and the link between the two along its northern border, where it had arrested and convicted citizens from Lebanon involved in drug trafficking and providing strategic information to terrorists in exchange for drugs. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy must be carried out in a comprehensive manner. Tackling drugs and international crime required strengthening regional coordination and information sharing and overcoming political differences, which must not be allowed to undermine efforts to promote common interests and security.

25. **Mr. Muchemi** (Kenya) said that his delegation welcomed the continued strengthening of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity. It commended the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for its pivotal role in enhancing the capacity of States to respond more effectively to the challenges posed by transnational organized crime, corruption and terrorism, and endorsed the recommendations set forth in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity (A/62/126).

26. Kenya continued to benefit from the various technical assistance programmes undertaken by UNODC. Its seminars and training programmes in the criminal justice and law enforcement sectors had strengthened Kenya's national capacity to combat transnational crime. Its in-depth assessment of Kenya's institutional and legislative framework would enhance Kenya's capacity to combat money-laundering. Regrettably, participation in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols was still far from universal. Of grave concern was the low level of participation in the Firearms Protocol. His delegation urged States which had not yet done so to consider ratifying and acceding to those instruments. His Government was working closely with international partners and UNODC towards incorporating the Convention and protocols into its domestic legislation.

27. Kenya was committed to international efforts to combat trafficking in narcotic drugs. Despite its limited capacity, his Government had recently strengthened measures to counter drug trafficking, such as increased border controls and stringent penalties for drug trafficking. Such measures had yielded positive results. His Government had also participated actively in the Eastern and Southern African Anti-money-laundering Group and had enacted laws and established a national task force to combat money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.

28. Preventing and combating corruption was another formidable challenge for Kenya. The United Nations Convention against Corruption offered an unprecedented legal framework for fighting corruption. While his delegation was gratified that ratifications of and accessions to the Convention continued to increase steadily, it wished to see participation by all regions of the world. The Government continued to face

challenges, relating to the question of jurisdiction, in its efforts to recover assets acquired through corruption. Kenya was implementing a national anti-corruption strategy and had upgraded its legal framework, reinforced weak institutions and established new ones which would provide leadership in combating corruption. It had enacted legislation which defined corruption and established comprehensive rules on transparency and accountability. His delegation commended UNODC on its continued support for regional initiatives to combat transnational organized crime and called on the international community to support its Programme of Action for Africa 2006-2010.

29. **Ms. Cowan** (Canada) said that the first Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption had marked a success. Canada's recent ratification of the Convention reflected her Government's commitment to deliver greater accountability in government and to combat corruption. Her Government would also be sponsoring a series of initiatives with UNODC to further its implementation, including workshops in Latin America, the Caribbean and Central Asia. Canada had recently announced a new national anti-drug strategy with a particular emphasis on young persons. The strategy included the following priority areas: preventing illicit drug use; treating illicit drug dependency; cracking down on organized crime; and combating illicit drug production and distribution. It sought to reduce the supply and demand for illicit drugs and promote safer and healthier communities.

30. Canada took the crime of human trafficking seriously. It was guided by its domestic and international commitments, including the Trafficking Protocol. It continued to strengthen its efforts on prevention of trafficking, protection of victims, prosecution of traffickers and building partnerships, both domestically and internationally. It supported the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking and would participate actively in the forum in Vienna in February 2008.

31. The Government supported international discussion of rule of law themes, including the need to promote strengthened criminal justice systems, and the continued work of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. It also supported the recent priorities for technical assistance adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime.

32. Canada welcomed the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Its national counter-terrorism capacity-building programme had supported the work of UNODC in the area of counterfeiting in Asia and the efforts of the Terrorism Prevention Branch to strengthen the legal regime against terrorism in the Americas. The programme took a balanced approach by assisting States in developing responses which took into account national security interests while remaining faithful to human rights principles and fundamental freedoms.

33. The Government was concerned by the crime and drug situation in Afghanistan and in the Americas. With respect to Afghanistan, it had announced a contribution to UNODC aimed at building the capacity of counter-narcotics law enforcement, strengthening the judicial system and helping Afghanistan work with its neighbours to combat cross-border narcotics trafficking. Many of the security challenges in the Americas stemmed from the illicit drug trade and corresponding organized crime. Canada participated in a series of regional and other forums, where it shared best practices, sponsored technical assistance and supported the regional implementation of international crime and drug instruments.

34. Canada welcomed the UNODC Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2011 and remained committed to cooperating with UNODC and other key international, regional and bilateral partners.

35. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that Lebanon followed a zero-tolerance policy with regard to drugs. In 1998 it had enacted a revised drug control law which included provisions on money-laundering and had implemented a national strategy aimed at reducing the supply of and demand for drugs and ensuring the treatment of drug users. Concerning supply, Lebanon implemented long-term programmes to eliminate illicit drug crops. Since 2002, Lebanon had destroyed millions of square metres of illicit crops, including cocaine crops, opium poppies, cannabis plants and all hashish crops. The authorities had also seized significant quantities of drugs, reduced drug trafficking and cooperated with Interpol. To reduce demand, the Government implemented awareness-raising programmes, organized courses, conferences and

workshops and disseminated relevant information through the media and civil society.

36. With regard to treatment, recently enacted legislation viewed drug addicts as patients rather than criminals and offered them the option of entering a hospital or treatment centre. The Drug Control Office in the Lebanese Ministry of the Interior participated regularly in the meetings of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the Arab Office for Narcotic Affairs in the Arab Interior Ministers' Council, cooperated closely with the regional office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Cairo and submitted reports to UNODC and to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). However, the Government had been unable to fully implement its plans against drug trafficking because of insufficient assistance from the international community.

37. In view of the link between money-laundering and transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, a law criminalizing money-laundering had been enacted in 2001. Moreover, in partnership with UNODC, Lebanon carried out Project Lebanon in support of the national anti-corruption strategy, funded by the United States. Project Lebanon focused on youth and involved the design of an ethics-based model to be tested in Lebanese schools. Furthermore, as a victim of terrorism in various forms ranging from foreign occupation by Israel to terrorist attacks and assassinations of leaders and journalists, Lebanon was committed to combat terrorism in all its manifestations and was a staunch ally in international efforts in that area, having ratified 11 of the 13 international conventions on terrorism and the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism and cooperating fully with the 1267, 1373, and 1540 Committees.

38. **Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia) said that crime prevention, criminal justice and drug control, all of them crucial to world peace and security in view of globalization, were increasingly intertwined and international cooperation was imperative. Organized transboundary crime, corruption, terrorism and illegal trafficking in people and weapons were expanding at an alarming rate, particularly in the developing world and especially in the least developed countries, which lacked sufficient financial and technological resources and know-how to protect themselves. It was therefore encouraging that UNODC and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice had convened a series of conferences on those issues and that practical preventive measures were being taken to implement the relevant decisions and resolutions. In that regard, the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action on Crime and Justice, entitled "Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century", and the outcome of the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice were particularly noteworthy.

39. His Government implemented those decisions and sought peace and security at home in order to ensure an environment conducive to the people's active participation in the development process. Efforts to improve the judicial system included capacity-building, establishment of a justice system reform centre and a drug administration and control agency, training for judges and public prosecutors and new legislation. New provisions on trafficking in persons, money-laundering and corruption had been incorporated into the revised penal code. The provisions on corruption reflected the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which Ethiopia had signed. Moreover, his country had concluded bilateral agreements with Kenya, Djibouti and the Sudan for combating transboundary crime. Ethiopia met its financial obligations to Interpol and played a pivotal role within the East African Police Chiefs' Organization (EAPCO). The fulfilment of international obligations related to crime prevention, criminal justice and action to combat corruption and terrorism was onerous and called for increased global solidarity and cooperation. Ethiopia's partners should stand firm by their commitments to providing necessary financial and technical support.

40. **Mr. Dall'Oglio** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that his organization, in cooperation with other major intergovernmental bodies, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), had promoted the Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking (UN.GIFT), which constituted a turning point in action to combat human trafficking. IOM currently carried out counter-trafficking operations in 84 countries. Those activities focused on (i) research and data collection, (ii) prevention through information dissemination and awareness-raising, (iii) institutional capacity-building in the public and civil-society sectors, (iv) direct assistance to trafficked persons, including shelter, safe

return and reintegration, and (v) support in the area of anti-trafficking legislation and policy.

41. Although demand for trafficked persons was a root cause of trafficking, preventive action to curb that demand was lacking. In fact, anti-trafficking resources, largely supplied by destination countries and spent in countries of origin, were used to curtail the supply of unregulated cheap labour and services in sectors particularly prone to exploitation. That approach should be coupled with increased focus on inhibiting demand for cheap labour and services in destination countries, including those in Western Europe. Counter-trafficking work had focused on women and children subjected to sexual exploitation, yet an increasing number of reported cases included men and boys. For the coming years, IOM expected a continuous increase in trafficking aimed at forced or exploited labour in the sectors of agriculture, food processing, textiles, domestic services, hotels and related activities, construction and mining.

42. IOM was ready to support policies designed to reduce demand for trafficked workers in destination countries. Such measures included applying existing labour laws to informal and unregulated employment; encouraging the creation of ethical employer associations; and developing guidelines and public awareness campaigns to assist consumers in identifying goods and services involving acceptable forms of labour. There was a clear need for opening more legal channels of migration to prevent trafficking through further subregional and bilateral initiatives enhancing labour migration cooperation and mechanisms for mainstreaming gender issues. Such approaches should be coupled with effective systems for inspecting recruitment in the source countries and with the provision of protection to migrants in the destination countries.

43. **Mr. Schulz** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that the Federation had first-hand experience of the humanitarian consequences of the misuse and abuse of drugs. He urged the bodies concerned to be guided by science, not by ignorance and fear, and to treat drug users in a humane way, respecting them as people with rights and needs. The 2008-2009 events marking the tenth anniversary of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly should respect the priority given in recent years to HIV-affected people and communities. In many countries, notably in Central Asia, HIV was directly related to drug use and abuse, while stigma and discrimination contributed to the marginalization of affected groups. Accordingly, IFRC hailed the attention paid by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to the drug problem in countries affected by poverty and insecurity and appealed for the inclusion of drug issues in strategies designed to achieve sustainable economic development.

44. Substance abuse issues were directly, indirectly or potentially related to the four main challenges confronting the global community, namely, environmental hazards, including climate change; migration; violence, particularly in urban settings; and emergent and recurring diseases and public health challenges. Improved statistics, although difficult to compile, helped to show the extent of the drug problem. For instance, Kazakhstan's official statistics showed approximately 45,000 registered intravenous drugs users (IDUs), while a study conducted in the period 1998-2000 indicated that the actual number of IDUs could be over 250,000. Persons in their twenties were the most affected age group. The infected population was largely male, but there was evidence of an increase in the number of women at risk or infected.

45. Experience in Kazakhstan and in other countries had shown that anti-drug programmes should involve communities and be managed by them or with their support. Thousands of volunteers mobilized in Kazakhstan by the Red Crescent Society stressed that, without a massive increase in funding and in the absence of comprehensive harm reduction approaches, the rate of HIV infection due to injecting drugs would continue to rise. Preliminary findings of a survey carried out by the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies regarding substance abuse would be presented at a workshop to be hosted in November 2007 by IFRC and the Italian Red Cross and were expected significantly to contribute to the work of communities, national Governments, UNODC and other bodies.

46. **Mr. Gebre-Egziabher** (United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)) said that a better understanding of the dynamics of rapid urbanization was crucial to dealing with urban crime. The proportion of the world's population living in cities, 50 per cent in 2007, was expected to reach two-thirds by 2030, with 95 per cent of that growth occurring in developing countries. Urban growth was becoming synonymous with slum growth. In most

countries experiencing rapid urbanization, much remained to be done to strengthen policing and criminal justice systems. It was urgent to take action at the local level to support the rights of the urban poor and to adopt a concerted approach to housing and services, including ensuring security of tenure and the reintegration of blighted neighbourhoods into the urban fabric. That entailed more participatory urban planning and management. In that connection, the role of local government was essential and the building of adequate capacities was crucial to city-specific crime prevention strategies.

47. Those strategies should be assessed by the degree of protection afforded to the most vulnerable segments of society. Surveys showed that not even 25 per cent of criminal incidents occurring in slums were reported. An effective public policy required overcoming that knowledge gap. To that end, UN-HABITAT had formed a Consultative Group of Partners and worked closely with UNODC and other agencies in order to develop appropriate synergies. Moreover, in its Global Report on Human Settlements 2007, entitled "Enhancing Urban Safety and Security", UN-HABITAT had made a strong case for urban crime prevention initiatives to be incorporated in urban development planning and poverty reduction initiatives, and for national Governments to support the crime prevention efforts deployed by municipalities and communities. In connection with the World Habitat Day, UN-HABITAT, in cooperation with the Government of Mexico, had organized in October 2007 an international conference on the current state of urban safety. The final recommendations of that conference provided a set of clear and agreed indications for work in that area. Such outcomes would ultimately serve as a basis for discussion at a high-level intergovernmental forum on urban crime prevention. That event, jointly organized by UN-HABITAT, UNODC and other multilateral partners, would take place during the fourth session of the World Urban Forum to be held in Nanjing, China, in October 2008.

48. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply with reference to the statement made by Israel, said that Israeli delegates had attempted to politicize the problem of drugs when all other members were trying to find constructive solutions to it. Although his delegation had not intended to reply to the statement by the Israeli delegation, it felt compelled to do so to clarify its baseless allegations. Contrary to the statement by Israel, the region's failure to cooperate in combating organized crime stemmed not from political differences but rather the ongoing occupation. When that occupation ceased, his delegation would be willing to cooperate on all issues.

49. According to a 2003 United States State Department report, Israel was at the centre of international trafficking in ecstasy. According to United States Drug Enforcement Administration agents, Israelis had been involved in almost all of the major arrests for trafficking in ecstasy. One example involved a notorious mob called the Arizona Ring which, according to the *New York Times*, had purchased ecstasy pills from a drug supplier based in Brooklyn who had ties to the Israeli mob. Israelis were veterans, a New York narcotics agent reportedly said. Some had served in elite and intelligence units and knew all the tricks of surveillance and counter-surveillance. They were very hard to catch.

50. Although Israel had long been known for its wholesome oranges and leather sandals, its current main trade included the virtual monopoly on the global trafficking in ecstasy. Ecstasy, along with marijuana, hashish, heroin and cocaine, was currently heavily used and traded in Israel. Contemporary Israel was an affluent, drug-consuming country with an estimated 300,000 casual drug users and some 20,000 junkies. There were no reliable statistics on ecstasy use in Israel. In 2000 alone, however, police had confiscated 270,000 ecstasy tablets from smugglers, students and party-goers.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.

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Summary record of the 9th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 15 October 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Wolfe .... (Jamaica)

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Agenda item 63: Advancement of women

(a) Advancement of women

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 63: Advancement of Women (A/61/283 and 303)

(a) Advancement of women (A/62/38, 177, 201, 202 and 290)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/62/178)

1. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that it had been a positive year for women and for gender equality issues. In March 2007, an informal thematic debate held by the General Assembly, on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment had strengthened consensus that gender equality was both an important goal and an essential precursor to political stability, peace and sustainable development. At its substantive session of 2007, the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council had emphasized the centrality of gender equality to development and poverty eradication, as reflected in its ministerial declaration (E/2007/L.13). The Commission on the Status of Women, for its part, while acknowledging that policies and legal frameworks had been established to protect and promote the rights of the girl child, had noted at its fifty-first session that violence against women and girls continued unabated in every continent, country and culture, with a devastating impact on society as a whole.

2. The year 2007 had seen an increased focus by both Member States and United Nations bodies on implementation of commitments to gender equality as well as further efforts to build the Organization's effectiveness in meeting challenges facing women.

3. In the current biennium, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had been able to hold constructive dialogues with as many as 69 States parties. Responsibility for supporting the Committee would be transferred to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva as of 1 January 2008.

4. Despite achievements on women's issues and progress in the fields of anti-discrimination legislation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, health, employment, education and political participation, women continued to face major challenges, such as poverty, violence, conflict, marginalization, restrictions in access to resources and exclusion from decision-making. They continued to suffer limited access to credit, land and training in new technologies as well as fewer educational and employment opportunities. Policies and programmes to address the situation must be guided by the acknowledgement that the majority of the world's poor were women and that without reducing women's poverty, overall poverty eradication goals would remain elusive.

5. The High-level Special Session on Climate Change had underscored the threat posed to humanity by deforestation, desertification, greenhouse gases and biofuels. In the 1991 cyclone disasters that had killed 140,000 in Bangladesh, 90 per cent of the victims had been women. Similarly, in the Asian tsunami of 2004, women had accounted for 70 to 80 per cent of all deaths. Women also faced the greatest obstacles in re-establishing their livelihoods in the wake of disasters. Governments, United Nations entities, civil society and the private sector must work together to integrate women's concerns in climate change programmes and policies in line with the Beijing Platform of Action, which called for enhanced participation of women in the management of environmental resources and the reduction of environmental risks to women.

6. General Assembly resolution 61/143 had given unprecedented visibility to the issue of violence against women, highlighting the urgent need for action. Towards the end of 2007, the Secretary-General would be launching a system-wide, multi-year campaign to ensure a consistent and comprehensive response, especially in support of action at the national level. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality would play a critical coordinating role.

7 Responses by both Member States and the United Nations system to grave violations of women's human rights in conflict and post-conflict situations remained inadequate, with impunity for sexual and gender-based violence persisting. Moreover, although women often organized at the grass-roots level to promote peace, their access to formal peacemaking and peacebuilding processes remained restricted.

8. Two reviews of the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on resolution 1325

(2000) held in 2006 and 2007 had revealed that although significant progress had been made in recent years in terms of policy reforms, norm-setting and institutional development, the large gap between policy and practice at the country level must be urgently addressed. A re-conceptualized Plan for 2008-2009 would provide a more focused, results-based programming, reporting and monitoring tool.

9. The Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality was collaborating effectively to develop competencies and methodologies for gender mainstreaming, gender training and budgeting. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) was increasingly involved in coordinating gender mainstreaming activities. The United Nations system now possessed a common strategy and policy to that end, which included system-wide indicators and standards. However, although consistent efforts were being made by United Nations bodies to incorporate gender perspectives into their substantive work and plans, slow progress in improving the representation of women in the Secretariat remained of serious concern. As of 30 June 2007, women had represented only 37 per cent of professional and higher category appointments of one year or more, representing a decrease of 0.3 per cent since 30 June 2006; only six of 33 Under-Secretaries-General were currently women, and only 11 of 42 Assistant Secretaries-General. The Women Leaders Working Group, meeting in Vienna in May, had called on the Secretary-General to prioritize the establishment of a mechanism to increase the number of women considered for appointment as special representatives and envoys. The Secretary-General was deeply concerned about the underrepresentation of women in senior echelons. Her own Office was currently working with the Deputy Secretary-General and the Department of Management on concrete proposals to remedy the situation. Member States should also use their influence to increase representation of women in intergovernmental bodies and within the United Nations system.

10. In recent informal consultations, Member States had strongly reaffirmed that gender equality was a central goal for Member States and the United Nations system. They had also recognized gender equality as a cross-cutting issue and agreed that the existing gender architecture was incoherent and under-resourced.

11. **Ms. Hannan** (Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women) introduced a number of reports before the Committee. The report on the Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/62/290) noted that ratification of the Convention had increased by 5 per cent since July 2005, to 185 States parties, and ratification of the Optional Protocol by 17 per cent to 88 States parties. Acceptances of the amendment to article 20.1 stood at 49, representing a 4 per cent increase. The report also recommended that the Assembly should approve the request of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for extension of its meeting time for 2008 and beyond. The Division for the Advancement of Women continued to provide technical assistance to States parties of the Convention upon request, including to countries emerging from conflict.

12. The report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions, was contained in document A/62/38. The Division for the Advancement of Women had benefited greatly from the expertise the members of that Committee had brought to the work of the United Nations on gender equality in New York and would continue to support the Committee in every way possible.

13. The report of the Secretary-General on future operations of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (A/62/173) outlined activities undertaken by INSTRAW in the period 2006-2007, including in the areas of migration and development, women's political participation and governance and women, peace and security. It also highlighted collaboration with other entities.

14. The report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/62/201) highlighted the Secretary-General's commitment to a stronger and more visible role for the Organization in efforts to eliminate violence against women, concluding that entities of the United Nations system had stepped up their efforts in that regard.

15. The biennial report on violence against women migrant workers (A/62/177) analysed recent activities of Member States, including research, legal measures, policies, programmes and national strategies. It noted

efforts to ensure the safe repatriation of migrants and to regulate employment and migration and reported on activities undertaken in that regard by the United Nations system. It highlighted the need for gender-sensitive international migration policies that supported the empowerment of female migrants, as well as the need for further assessment of the effectiveness of measures to combat violence against female migrant workers.

16. The report on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/62/202) highlighted efforts to incorporate rural women in gender equality policies and strategies and rural development policies and programmes. It provided little information, however, on efforts to involve rural women in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of such policies and programmes. The report identified a number of promising practices in increasing rural women's access to information and communication technology. It did not, however, include any reference to input from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on the need to address the reproductive needs of rural women.

17. The report on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/62/178) examined the extent to which intergovernmental bodies had paid attention to gender perspectives in their work and assessed the impact of the input of the Commission on the Status of Women to discussions within the United Nations system. At the Assembly's sixty-first session, gender perspectives had been more systematically integrated in outcomes dealing with social development and human rights, but had been less prominent in outcomes relating to economic and political issues. Although the Economic and Social Council had continued efforts to integrate gender perspectives into its work, there was a need for more systematic attention to gender perspectives by functional commissions, including through increased consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission continued to play a catalytic role in advancing gender mainstreaming at all levels. The conclusions adopted at its fiftieth session had influenced policies and operational activities by increasing advocacy and awareness-raising activities and enhancing efforts to improve women's representation. The report recommended, inter alia, that the Secretary-General's reports should systematically include qualitative gender analysis, quantitative data and concrete recommendations to facilitate gender-sensitive policy development and that gender perspectives should be explicitly incorporated in implementation and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits.

18. **Ms. Sandler** (Ad Interim Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that the report on the activities of UNIFEM (A/62/188) highlighted practical actions in the four thematic areas that framed its current four-year plan — reducing feminized poverty and exclusion; promoting gender equality in democratic governance and post-conflict reconstruction; ending violence against women; and halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS. Three outcome-level results were used by UNIFEM to track its contributions to advancing national, regional and global initiatives for achieving gender equality. The first result area related to formulating and implementing gender equality plans, laws and policies. UNIFEM supported countries in strengthening their laws and policies and aligning them with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. An example was its support of the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs in its efforts to ensure that the National Plan of Action for Women's Advancement was fully incorporated into the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Afghanistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

19. The second result area consisted of strengthening mainstream institutions to implement commitments to gender equality. Gender-responsive budgeting, increasingly used by countries, was perhaps the most concrete and practical tool in that regard. From 2004 to 2007, with support from many bilateral donors, UNIFEM had provided assistance in 41 countries, almost double the number during the previous four-year plan. The challenge lay in building sustainability into such initiatives and ensuring that they became central to larger development planning processes.

20. Another example of UNIFEM support to implementation involved developments related to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, managed by UNIFEM on behalf of the United Nations system. Resolution 61/143 on intensification of efforts to eliminate violence against women called for strengthening the Trust Fund and for States to

increase their support, and progress had been made on both fronts. Contributions to the Trust Fund had grown nearly 300 per cent in the previous two biennia, and the United Nations Inter-Agency Programme Appraisal Committee of the Trust Fund was working to strengthen its grant making and evaluation processes.

21. Mainstream institutions were increasingly placing gender equality higher on their policy and programming agendas. However, political will alone did not translate into greater security, resources or rights, a fact best illustrated by the increasing use of rape as a weapon of war. Without an end to impunity for perpetrators, incentive systems that rewarded better responses to protect women from sexual abuse and partnerships that expanded resources and capacities, efforts would fall short of what was needed. Partnerships such as United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, made up of 12 United Nations organizations, represented progress, but more action was needed.

22. The third result area related to supporting the capacity of gender equality advocates to influence mainstream development. UNIFEM had provided support in 15 countries in 2006 to strengthen women's participation as voters, candidates and decision makers in elections, including in post-conflict countries. That work was fundamental to achieving the Millennium Development Goals but should move beyond a simple focus on numbers. It was estimated that it would take 50 years to reach parity throughout the world. Much more support and knowledge was needed to address the common constraints that women faced as candidates, including lack of resources, networks and in some cases basic security.

23. Based on the Fund's assessment of its current four-year plan and its work in the United Nations Development Group on mapping the work of United Nations Country Teams on gender equality, three key challenges continually emerged: replication and upscaling proven approaches, capacity development and partnerships and coordination. UNIFEM would continue to invest in critical efforts to allow it to work on both parts of its mandate, direct support to countries and mainstreaming gender equality in the United Nations system.

24. **Ms. Pérez Álvarez** (Cuba) asked what the thematic initiatives mentioned in paragraph 64 of the Secretary-General's report (A/62/201) were, and, with regard to paragraph 67, how the Task Force on Violence against Women would avoid duplicate efforts. Referring to the statement by the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, she expressed its concern at the fact that the activities of the new gender unit established by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) established a new unit for gender issues that might overlap with those of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Commission on the Status of Women.

25. During the summer of 2007, informal consultations had been organized on the report of the High-level Panel on system-wide coherence, and a number of delegations had emphasized the need to ensure that the system of intergovernmental consultations was maintained. On gender issues, a number of delegations, including her own, had emphasized the need to ensure compliance with the Beijing Platform for Action. Capacity-building programmes in developing countries must continue, and official development assistance must not be relegated to a second place.

26. She asked what could be done to avoid the elimination of specificities from United Nations work on gender and how the role of the Commission on the Status of Women could be strengthened.

27. **Mr. Bollavaram** (India) said that consensus existed within the United Nations system on a gender mainstreaming strategy. It was ironic that, in reports to the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General expressed concern at a lack of knowledge about operationalization of gender mainstreaming policies among senior managers of the United Nations. Another cause of concern was the distressingly slow rate at which gender parity was being achieved. The United Nations was a strategic partner to Member States, and it could not make a convincing moral argument if its own situation with regard to gender issues was not in order. He asked what specific measures were in place to address those two issues in the near future.

28. **Ms. Sulimani** (Sierra Leone) expressed appreciation for the support of the Division for the Advancement of Women in Sierra Leone helping build its capacity to comply with its reporting obligations under article 18 of the Convention. Sierra Leone had ratified the Convention in 1988, but a devastating

conflict had broken out immediately thereafter and had ended only five years earlier. As a result, it had not been able to submit its first five periodic reports until May 2007. The report had been commended by many as very comprehensive. Sierra Leone was fully committed to implementing the provisions of the Convention.

29. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) endorsed the comments made by the representative of India with regard to the United Nations as a model for gender equality, and requested further comment on the matter.

30. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) requested further information on how the issue of violence against women was being addressed in the occupied Palestinian territories and in all occupied territories, including the Golan Heights. She agreed with the representative of Cuba concerning the importance of implementing the outcomes of the Beijing Conference.

31. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), replying to the representative of Cuba, said that more detailed information about the thematic initiatives referred to in paragraph 64 of the Secretary-General's report on violence against women (A/62/201) could be found in paragraphs 8 to 18 of the report.

32. With regard to paragraph 67 of the report, she said that the campaign to eliminate violence against women would be launched towards the end of 2007 by the Secretary-General himself, after which high-level officials throughout the United Nations system would act as advocates for the elimination of violence against women.

33. In response to the representative of India, she acknowledged that, even at the highest levels, understanding of gender mainstreaming could be improved. The Secretariat had been working very hard on United Nations-wide gender mainstreaming. Efforts continued to develop a system-wide action plan with clear indicators, a clear time framework and clear monitoring mechanisms; monitoring would be ensured by the CEB, making heads of entities accountable for gender mainstreaming in their respective areas of work. Work was also beginning on the development of a module for system-wide capacity training for gender mainstreaming.

34. Replying to the representatives of India and the Sudan, she said it was unacceptable that the numbers of women in high-level positions were either decreasing or, at best, static. Consultants were being commissioned to look into that issue. She hoped that a mechanism would be put in place very shortly to improve United Nations recruitment of women at senior levels, a goal that was of significant importance to the Secretary-General.

35. **Ms. Hannan** (Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women) said that the new gender unit in OHCHR would not replace or duplicate the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) which would continue to ensure that women's human rights have a strong focus in the work of the United Nations in New York. She noted that a joint OHCHR/DAW work programme was prepared on an annual basis, precisely to avoid duplication and ensure collaboration and coordination. In that context the work of networks in the United Nations was critical.

36. While she agreed that it was important for Member States to think strategically about ways to strengthen the role of the Commission for the Status of Women, the recent changes in the Commission's methods of work had been positive. The Commission chose its priority themes in accordance with the broader agenda of the United Nations, systematically transmitted its outcomes to other parts of the United Nations, and had a strong focus on implementation at the national level. The high level of the Commission's participants was also an indication of the value placed on it.

37. In response to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, she referred to another project in the occupied Palestinian territories, a joint Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)/DAW workshop with countries of the region, as a follow-up to the concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Violence against women was one of the issues to be addressed. She did not have further information on the particular initiative mentioned by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, but such information could be obtained.

38. **Ms. Sandler** (Ad Interim Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that UNIFEM had taken a number of initiatives for Palestinian women, including support to

women's centres, and programmes to provide them with livelihoods and to combat violence against women. With regard to progress in gender mainstreaming at the country level, there was a great deal of conceptual confusion among senior managers as to how it should be defined. Therefore, greater focus was planned on system-wide strategies and plans and expectations of senior managers and country teams in that area, including development of performance indicators. The resolutions on violence against women adopted at the sixty-first session had stimulated action and response at both the country and regional levels, although much remained to be done.

39. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that she would like to hear more about the global campaign on behalf of Palestinian women in the next report of the Secretary-General.

40. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that the programme was in the process of being developed, and would be given more focus and prominence in future reports.

41. **Ms. Moreno** (Executive Director, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) said that the Executive Board of INSTRAW had approved a strategic framework for 2008-2011, a resource mobilization strategy and a workplan, thereby demonstrating that INSTRAW had become a matter of consensus rather than confrontation, and had returned to its position among gender institutions of the United Nations system. The Institute was undertaking research, capacity-building and knowledge management in the specific areas of the three pillars of the United Nations: development, peace and security and human rights.

42. In the area of development, the relevance of gender research in making women visible and improving their status had been proven. The impact of the INSTRAW initiative to include a gender perspective in the analysis of remittances had led to recognition in financial forums of women's important role in sending and managing remittances and their potential contribution to development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Research had been undertaken on global care chains between sending and receiving countries and on the functioning of new social structures in which transnational families were a growing phenomenon. Adjustments in gender roles in line with women's new economic responsibilities and persistent discrimination had also been analysed. In some cases, capacity-building activities aimed at improving the living conditions of women migrants would be initiated.

43. With regard to peace and security, women had the right to live without fear both within and outside their homes. The Institute had developed materials to contribute to the elimination of violence against women. The need to include a gender perspective in the reform of the security sector in compliance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) had led to the development of a virtual community, an inter-agency working group and an interactive Web page on gender training of peacekeeping personnel worldwide.

44. On the subject of human rights, there could be no true democracy without the political participation of women. An increasing number of women were candidates in national elections and some held positions of power, but discrimination persisted. Research undertaken by INSTRAW had shown that discrimination against women was stronger at the local level, which called for equal opportunity measures in local politics.

45. The greatest challenge facing the Institute continued to be financing on the basis of voluntary contributions, and she called on all Member States to contribute to its core budget, which would be supplemented through funds from the United Nations Foundation.

46. **Ms. Šimonović** (Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that during 2007, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of its inaugural session. When it had taken place, in October 1982, there had been only 42 States parties to the Convention and only one annual two-week session, compared to the current 185 States parties and three sessions of three weeks each. Much had been achieved over those 25 years, including the adoption of the Optional Protocol in 1999, which had been ratified or acceded to by 88 States. Since its entry into force in December 2000, the Committee had taken action on 10 communications submitted by individuals and undertaken one inquiry under the Optional Protocol.

47. The past two years had been exceptionally productive due to the extended meeting time for the Committee approved by the General Assembly in December 2005, which had allowed the Committee to hold a constructive dialogue with over one third of the States parties over the two-year period. In each instance, the States parties concerned had received detailed guidance on steps to accelerate implementation of the Convention. She expressed appreciation for the efforts of national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that the Committee's concluding comments received the necessary follow-up. She drew attention to the Committee's report on the three sessions of 2007, contained in document A/62/38.

48. Significant progress had been made in reducing the backlog of reports awaiting consideration, but it had not yet been completely eliminated. The Committee had also stepped up its efforts to encourage States parties with long overdue reports to comply with their reporting obligations. Given its workload and its new responsibilities under the Optional Protocol, the Committee had therefore decided to submit to the General Assembly a request for an extension of meeting time to hold three annual sessions as a long-term measure, which would be equivalent to the meeting time of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Committee. It was also seeking authorization, as a temporary measure, to meet in parallel chambers for one of its annual sessions in 2008 and 2009, to ensure that the backlog was completely eliminated. The Committee was aware of the significant resource implications of its request, and appreciated the expressions of support it had already received. The support of all Member States would secure a sustainable framework for its future work and would be a further confirmation of the priority attached to the common commitment to eliminate discrimination against women and promote gender equality.

49. Over the past 25 years, the Committee had been supported by the Division for the Advancement of Women. Responsibility for its servicing would be transferred to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as of 1 January 2008. The Committee looked forward to maintaining strong links with the Division in the future, or with any new structure that might be entrusted with the promotion of gender equality.

50. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly remained the guiding policy frameworks for gender equality and empowerment of women. Since its sixty-first session the General Assembly had paid specific attention to gender equality, including in the areas of violence against women, trafficking in women and girls, improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system and follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls and equal participation of women in social, cultural, economic and political life was an acknowledged prerequisite for sustainable development.

51. The Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1) had observed that as long as violence against women continued, it could not be claimed that real progress was being made towards equality, development and peace. The challenge was to surmount that highly complex and historically entrenched phenomenon. Poverty and social and economic upheaval exacerbated the risk of abuse and exploitation of women. The plight of women in rural areas, conflict situations, territories under foreign occupation, of migrant and trafficked women and of women and girls affected by unilateral coercive measures needed immediate attention. The Group of 77 and China was pleased to note that the Secretary-General was committed to a stronger and more visible role for the United Nations in that area and would soon launch a campaign to focus on advocacy, leadership and strengthened efforts at the regional and national levels.

52. Redressing a number of problems would remain crucial to efforts to eliminate violence against women and promote their economic, social and political advancement. First, women continued to suffer discrimination and exclusion in all societies, resulting from stereotypes and prejudice. Second, there was a clear linkage between underdevelopment and violence against women. The goals of development and poverty reduction could not be realized without the empowerment of women. Third, the plight of women in rural areas, conflict situations, territories under foreign occupation and of migrant and trafficked women must be addressed as a top priority. Fourth, advancement of

women was both a national and an international responsibility and could be achieved through cooperation in the context of globalization and the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

53. Central to the reduction of poverty among women was increasing their educational and training opportunities. Women's education decreased child mortality and improved the health of the family. It improved their chances for employment and therefore the welfare of the family in general. Women became more aware of their rights, and in turn increased their level of political participation. Education should serve as a vehicle for transforming attitudes, beliefs and entrenched social norms that perpetuated discrimination and inequality. The persistence of conflict in various parts of the world was another major impediment to the elimination of violence and sexual abuse of women. Special attention must be paid to the plight of women and their families living under foreign occupation to ensure that their basic rights were guaranteed.

54. All countries should take measures to address that challenge at the national level by bringing legislation in the area of gender discrimination into conformity with international human rights instruments. At the same time, international cooperation and partnership must be enhanced to assist countries in achieving that goal. For the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the international community must honour its commitment to official development assistance, debt relief and the opening of markets. By translating commitments into action, it was still possible to meet the challenge of eliminating violence against women.

55. **Ms. Mwaffisi** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that SADC was committed to addressing the priority needs of eradicating poverty and inequality among the people of the region. Gender equality and equitable participation of all people was not only a human right but imperative for economic growth, poverty eradication and overall human development. Accordingly, SADC had established gender policy frameworks, but there were disparities between policy and practice, coupled with technical, human and resource constraints and inadequate systems for monitoring, evaluation and timely reporting. SADC was in the final stages of developing a gender policy and protocol, which would be a guiding tool on improving synergies between national and regional structures and for gender mainstreaming.

56. Gender equality could not be achieved without addressing the improvement of the situation of rural women, who constituted the majority of the poor in the SADC region and were not fully involved in decision-making structures pertaining to their lives. SADC thus welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/62/202) and the recommendations it contained, and called for enhanced political commitment in implementing them.

57. SADC remained concerned at the increasing feminization of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The proportion of women infected with HIV and at risk of malaria continued to increase, and malaria in pregnancy was a major cause for concern. Poverty, poor nutrition and underdevelopment increased women's vulnerability, and women in rural areas were most at risk. It therefore called on the international community to continue to support its efforts to increase access to prevention, treatment, care and support.

58. SADC welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/143. It was fully committed to the eradication of all forms of violence against women and would report on its research in that area at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. It recognized the efforts of the United Nations system, in particular the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, in the endeavour to eradicate all forms of violence against women. The Secretary-General's global campaign on violence against women was an important initiative.

59. SADC commended the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and would support its request to be provided, on a permanent basis, with three annual sessions of three weeks each, as well as the additional meeting time in parallel chambers on a temporary basis. The progress achieved by INSTRAW must be acknowledged and supported, and its work should be made more visible in all regions.

60. The Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly remained important for the

attainment of gender equality objectives and the advancement of women as well as the Millennium Development Goals. SADC was thus concerned that gender was integrated into only about one quarter of the outcomes of the General Assembly and was given greatest attention in outcomes dealing with social development and human rights, but received less attention in outcomes relating to economic and political issues. Gender was a cross-cutting issue that should be mainstreamed throughout the United Nations system. In addition to the recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in his report (A/62/178), she urged that measures for accountability for gender mainstreaming should be instituted in the United Nations system.

61. SADC had made tremendous efforts towards the achievement of gender equality and the advancement of women due to the political commitment and effort of its member States coupled with the support of its international partners. Many challenges remained, and she appealed for the continued support of the international community.

61. **Ms. Pérez Alvarez** (Cuba) said that attaining the Millennium Development Goals was by no means assured and the information provided on the status of their implementation did not give much reason for optimism. That was particularly true of the situation of women and girls, who continued to make up a majority of the poor. Gender inequity in employment, job security, salaries and access to education was contributing to the feminization of poverty. The International Labour Organization (ILO) had reported that more women than ever were unemployed or employed in low-productivity sectors, or received lower wages than men for doing the same work. Women also suffered the impacts of death in childbirth, HIV/AIDS and illiteracy.

62. Since the Revolution, her Government had been developing policies on gender equity. Cuba had been the first country to sign and the second to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. National laws and programmes recognized the fundamental productive and reproductive roles of women, and systematic efforts aimed at eliminating discriminatory stereotypes. Since 1960, employment of women had increased sevenfold, and women currently made up significant proportions of the technical, professional and managerial work forces. Cuba was one of the top ten countries worldwide in the number of female parliamentarians, with 36 per cent of seats held by women, thanks to a strategy of consciousness-raising in the community and among women in particular.

63. Cuba recognized the importance of domestic labour, and women received salaries while caring for the disabled, ill children or adolescents and the elderly. Her Government's commitment to gender equality was being realized through programmes that guaranteed free universal access to health care, education, employment and social security.

64. All those efforts took place in spite of the economic, commercial and financial blockade that had been imposed on Cuba for almost half a century by the United States Government. That hostile policy had included support for terrorist acts against Cubans. Five Cuban anti-terrorism fighters remained illegally detained in American territory since 1998. Two of their spouses had been denied visas to visit them, in breach of international instruments and United States law.

65. Until the international community applied policies driven by international cooperation and human solidarity to put an end to gender inequities and the unequal distribution of wealth, the rights of women and girls would remain in jeopardy.

66. **Ms. Smit** (Netherlands) said that education was the key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, empowering women and giving them economic and social independence: by 2015, all girls must be in school, so that they could develop their full potential in a safe environment.

67. In the Netherlands, more than one half of university students were women and more women were graduating. Nevertheless, gender inequalities still existed in the labour force, where women were underrepresented in technical professions and held too few managerial positions and corporate directorships. Barriers to women's equal employment were an impediment to economic prosperity.

68. To help girls throughout the world develop their talents, the international community should give priority to a number of actions: making education neutral, so that boys and girls had the same opportunities; ensuring gender balance among teachers, who acted as role models; providing sex and gender education as a basis for healthy relationships at home

and at work; persuading parents that their daughters must finish school and encouraging girls to do so; and providing appropriate sanitary facilities in schools so that girls would feel safe and welcome there.

69. Governments must make better use of the know-how and networks of non-governmental organizations and United Nations funds and programmes in order to help young people everywhere achieve independence and prosperity.

70. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 had signalled a global commitment to the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality. The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000 had also represented major progress in putting those goals firmly on the international agenda. The high expectations thus set nevertheless remained unmet, despite the improvements detailed in the report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of those outcomes (A/62/178). More efforts by Member States and all mechanisms for women were therefore needed to accomplish the objectives of improving the status of women, protecting women's rights and widening the opportunities for women's participation in all activities.

71. Women in the Sudan had enjoyed full civil and political rights since the 1960s. The first woman parliamentarian, for instance, had taken her seat in 1965 and many others had since followed suit. Women also held senior positions in the judicial and executive branches of both federal and state government, as well as in the civil service. Legislation and laws had moreover been introduced to further strengthen the position of women on the basis of a heritage of beliefs, values and customs that safeguarded their status and emphasized their role in public life. Indeed, women's equal rights with men had always been affirmed in the Constitutions of the Sudan. The relevant national institutions and authorities were now also embarked on implementing a national policy for the empowerment of women, focusing on core areas for improvement identified with the aid of relevant statistics on the status of women.

72. Further gains for women in their role as genuine partners in all walks of life would, however, be achieved only through enhanced international coordination and cooperation, technical assistance and national capacity-building aimed at ensuring fulfilment of the commitments made for the empowerment and advancement of women. On a closing note, he urged immediate United Nations action that would not only end the daily tragedy of Palestinian women suffering under the Israeli occupation and embargo but also guarantee their right to a decent life of freedom in an independent homeland.

73. **Ms. Kurosaki** (Japan) said that progress for women was progress for all, a principle that was crucial to achieving internationally agreed development goals. Her Government recognized the importance of engaging in activities to create gender equity domestically, regionally and internationally. Its national plan for gender equality called for the proportion of women in leadership positions to increase to some 30 per cent by 2020. More women had been elected to parliament during the last elections. Approximately $39 billion of the national budget went to the promotion of gender equality.

74. In Japan, as elsewhere, women struggled to strike a good work-life balance and contended with a gender-based division of labour. While the proportion of women newly recruited to the workforce was growing, the number of women employed in corporate management remained low. Employment for women was especially low during their childbearing years; her Government had therefore raised its target for the number of men taking parental leave and had amended the law to prohibit lay-offs for reasons such as pregnancy and childbirth.

75. In 2007, Japan had co-sponsored a two-day symposium of gender experts that had resulted in a series of recommendations on how the Association of Southeast Asia Nations Plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea could work to alleviate the feminization of poverty. A second symposium had highlighted the importance of incorporating the care economy, with gender perspectives, into each country's economic and development aid policies.

76. Regional dialogues were effective ways of sharing information and good practices in gender mainstreaming within similar social and cultural contexts. They also helped forge collective regional responses to emerging gender-related problems such as human trafficking, HIV/AIDS and natural disasters.

77. Because gender equality and women's empowerment were cross-cutting issues, coordination and strategic partnerships within the United Nations system were critical. The High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence had called the current gender structure fragmented and incoherent. Her delegation stood ready to help the United Nations redress that situation.

78. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) said that integrating a gender perspective into the new vision of development was crucial to ensuring equal rights for women. Greater synergies should be developed between the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Declaration and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as a means of achieving all other development goals.

79. His Government had been at the forefront of endeavours to establish gender equality and empower women. Bangladesh was a party to almost all major international instruments in that area and was playing a pioneering role regionally through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). A national policy and action plan had been put in place, together with a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Women's voices were being heard through consultations during preparation of the country report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

80. Domestically inspired ideas such as access to microcredit and non-formal education were emancipating women economically. Women's employment was increasing steadily in the garment and leather industries and in the non-formal labour sector. International cooperation through financial and technical assistance as well as through trade would further improve the situation.

81. In the political arena, 45 seats in parliament were reserved for women, who could also contest direct elections. New legislation had resulted in 13,000 women being elected to local governments. Women held prominent positions in all professions, including as decision makers.

82. In education, Bangladesh had overcome an enormous gender gap over the previous decade and a half to achieve 100 per cent parity in primary and secondary enrolments by the end of 2006. Girls received a free education up to grade 11. In other areas, Bangladesh had worked on incorporating a gender perspective into its poverty-reduction strategies, and had enacted legislation to protect women and girls from violence.

83. As one of the largest troop contributors for peacekeeping and one of the sponsors of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, Bangladesh felt that the Peacebuilding Commission should implement that resolution fully in conflict resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

84. Despite the many achievements and the bridging of the gender gap in schooling, social inequities and injustice against women persisted. There was also a major poverty gap: women and girls were still the most vulnerable group in Bangladesh. International resources must be mobilized to help win what was an uphill battle. The United Nations was doing its best under the mandates entrusted to it; the developed world, for its part, should be lending more material support.

85. **Mr. Guo** Jiakun (China) said that there was broad consensus in the international community that women should be empowered, their rights and interests should be safeguarded and gender equality should be established. His delegation appreciated the increasing attention given to gender equality by intergovernmental organizations and supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that the concept of gender equality should be incorporated into the implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits.

86. His Government also supported the efforts, reviewed in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/202), to improve protection of the rights and interests of rural women. Such efforts would help eradicate poverty, improve education and extend health service to rural women.

87. In order to fulfil China's commitment under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a national programme had been established for 2001-2010. A recent midterm assessment showed that most of its main objectives had been met ahead of schedule, including in women's employment, attendance of girls in middle school, average life expectancy of women and safe drinking water. Governments at all levels had incorporated women's development into their planning, the relevant regulations were being strengthened and data collection and monitoring had begun taking gender-related indicators into account. A training

course on gender budgeting had been held in August 2007 to explore ways to incorporate gender awareness into national budgeting.

88. His Government was prepared to work with the international community to promote implementation of the Beijing Declaration and, on the basis of China's specific conditions, advance the cause of safeguarding the rights and interests of Chinese women.

89. **Ms. Banzon** (Philippines) said that the political, social and economic changes under way worldwide had reinforced stereotypes, leading to a perilous mixture of gender bias and discrimination based on class, age, race, ethnicity and faith. Migrant women were most vulnerable to that discriminatory environment, and therefore their protection was both a human rights and a development issue. Her delegation would once again be introducing a draft resolution on violence against women migrant workers calling for human rights-based and gender-sensitive labour and migration policies and better cooperation among all stakeholders.

90. In 2008, the Philippines would hold an international event focusing on migrant women and human rights, which would in turn inform the second Global Forum on Migration and Development to be hosted by the Philippines later in the year. The Forum would not only examine a range of issues in the protection of migrant women workers' rights but would also highlight areas such as good practices on reintegration, the use of remittances and financial literacy training.

91. Women could play an important role in peacemaking and reconciliation. To fulfil that potential, however, they had to live in an environment that included proper health care and education and in which their opinions were heard and respected. Moreover, there was a direct correlation between democracy and women's empowerment. The more democratic a political system was, the more opportunities there were for women to participate in leadership, decision-making and nation-building.

92. With respect to the gender architecture in the United Nations, her delegation was in favour of a restructuring that would enhance the effectiveness and coherence of the Organization's work on gender. Three aspects were particularly important: first, the work of the new gender entity should be genuinely demand-driven and based on an intersection of national priorities and international standards. Secondly, the entity must have the profile and stature to engage in important decision-making. Lastly, it must be adequately funded and funds must be channelled to respond to the gender priorities identified by countries in need.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe .... (Jamaica)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 63: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/38, A/62/177, A/62/202 and A/62/290)

(a) **Advancement of women** (*continued*) (A/62/173, A/62/201 and A/62/188)

(b) **Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly** (*continued*) (A/62/178)

1. **Ms. Carvalho** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that 2007 had been a year of reinforcing commitments and reflecting on strategic goals for the advancement of gender equality. Referring to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, she said that the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in July 2007 had been an occasion to take stock of that Committee's achievements and to assess how much remained to be accomplished. For instance, it was disappointing that only 88 countries were parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The European Union called on States parties to withdraw all reservations that were incompatible with the Convention and urged any States that had not yet ratified, acceded or succeeded to the Convention and the Optional Protocol to do so. The European Union also called on States parties that had not yet done so to take steps for a speedy acceptance of the 1995 amendment to the Convention regarding the Committee's meeting time.

2. In 2007, which had been designated "European Year of Equal Opportunities for All", several activities had been launched on the themes of rights, representation, recognition and respect and tolerance with a view to raising public awareness of gender issues. In the European Union, girls currently out-performed boys academically, but a gender pay gap of 15 per cent persisted. Moreover, 2007 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. Progress in achieving gender equality in the European Union had been achieved through equal treatment legislation, gender mainstreaming, specific measures and programmes, social dialogue and civil society participation. The European Parliament had been an active partner in that development, especially through its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

3. In early 2007, a European Commission Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation had introduced a new approach to development cooperation. The Communication stressed the need to tackle systematically the constraints on the achievement of gender equality and stated that broadening its scope beyond the social sectors was of particular importance. It provided guidelines on gender mainstreaming; proposed a list of measures regarding governance, employment, economic activities, education, health and combating gender-based violence; and described ways of promoting gender equality through budget support and sector-wide measures.

4. At a special Ministerial conference on gender equality held in Istanbul in November 2006, the members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership had agreed on a five-year framework of action for the promotion of gender equality in the civil, political, social, economic and cultural spheres. Progress would be evaluated on an annual basis. In 2005, the European Commission had adopted a proposal to create a "European Institute for Gender Equality" designed to consolidate European gender-equality policies. Having already established indicators on other priority areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, the European Union was currently in the process of adopting indicators on women and poverty. The Trio Presidency of the European Union had signed a Declaration reaffirming gender equality as a fundamental principle of the European Union and stressing that the European Pact for Gender Equality and the European Commission's Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men were complementary.

5. With a view to the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the European Union supported the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, and affirmed its commitment to the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held at Cairo in 1994, the

"ICPD+5 Key Actions" and the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Expanding access to information and services in the area of sexual and reproductive health was essential to implementing those programmes and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Training and the exchange of good practices in gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and gender impact assessment were crucial, as those tools were essential to decision-making. The European Union supported the new gender architecture proposed in the report of the High-Level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence and advocated the establishment of a new gender entity that would combine the normative and analytical functions of the existing architecture with a technical, policy-setting and programming role.

6. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM aligned itself with the statement made by the delegation of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were crucial to democracy and sustainable development. Obstacles to women's empowerment included poverty; entrenched attitudes, practices and stereotypes; and unequal access to economic resources. To overcome such obstacles, the entire international community should act in a spirit of partnership. Guided by framework agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem do Para Convention) and the MDGs, Governments across the region had implemented legislative and structural reforms aimed at gender equality. Progress had been made especially in the areas of education and women's participation in politics and decision-making. However, challenges persisted, particularly in relation to violence against women, HIV/AIDS and poverty. Accordingly, the CARICOM secretariat, in cooperation with women's affairs bureaux, had earmarked gender-based violence, health-related activities and development issues as priority matters to be addressed in the period 2007-2008.

7. Regarding violence against women, in 2006 the CARICOM secretariat and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had conducted a feasibility study on possible mechanisms for raising public awareness of the issue. The study had shown that violence against women was pervasive in the region regardless of education level, class or ethnicity. The Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) on Gender and Development, which included representatives of Governments, United Nations bodies and regional non-governmental organizations (NGOs), would meet in November 2007 to discuss, inter alia, appropriate mechanisms comprehensively to promote advocacy and political recognition of that issue. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) had conducted a series of awareness-raising campaigns in the region regarding various aspects of trafficking in persons, which particularly affected women and girls. Some States had enacted relevant legislation and others were in the process of doing so. CARICOM welcomed United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, launched in early 2007. Lastly, enhancement of women's decision-making role in the public and private sectors was instrumental to success in that area. Some CARICOM States were close to or had attained the relevant targets endorsed by the Economic and Social Council.

8. With regard to health, HIV/AIDS had a disproportionate effect on women and posed a serious threat to the full enjoyment of women's right to a high standard of physical and mental health. CARICOM Governments were committed to combating the spread of that epidemic. However, the magnitude of the problem required international assistance to ensure sustainability. The Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP), the main regional mechanism engaged in those efforts, emphasized awareness raising, de-stigmatization of the epidemic and enhanced access to treatment and support. The CARICOM Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases, held in Trinidad and Tobago in September 2007, had agreed to take into account the gender dimension in all programmes concerning such illnesses.

9. Concerning development, he noted that UNIFEM played a central role in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. In any deliberations on a new gender architecture, due prominence should be given not only to normative and advocacy aspects, but also to issues of development, operational activities and adequate resources. The celebration of World Rural Women's Day, the theme of which was "The right to food: rural women produce and provide", should serve

as a reminder that women, who accounted for more than a quarter of the world's population but only owned 2 per cent of the land and received 1 per cent of agricultural loans, should be granted greater access to land, credit and other required resources as part of agricultural development and the promotion of food security.

10. **Mr. del Rosario Cebalos** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that, in the light of their own diversity, the countries that made up the Group recognized women's historical contribution to democracy, human rights, gender equality, social justice, development, food security, the inclusion of peoples who had been historically and socially excluded and the preservation of the environment. Since poverty and unequal access to the region's resources continued to be an obstacle to gender equality, the elimination and reduction of political, economic, social, and cultural disparities should be main objectives of all development proposals. Economic and social development required comprehensive social security systems capable of guaranteeing, inter alia, women's well-being, quality of life and status.

11. In view of those objectives, the judicial frameworks of the Group's members had been updated on the basis of international and regional agreements and through national initiatives. The work of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women had primarily consisted of the formulation, design and implementation of gender equality policies at the highest levels of the region's States. Although the contribution of civil society, including NGOs and grass-roots communities was essential, the main responsibility for guaranteeing the human rights of women, young girls and adolescents lay with States. Public debate in the region focused on such subjects as eradication of violence against women, particularly domestic violence; recognition of their right to have access to reproductive health services; and the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women. The development of gender-disaggregated statistical data in the region was essential to the design of programmes and to the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in immigration policies and Government budgets. International cooperation was an essential complement to national efforts to broaden the scope of such measures with a view to eradicating poverty; ensuring access to health services, especially in view of the feminization of HIV/AIDS; implementing comprehensive social security systems and eliminating violence against women, including domestic violence and trafficking in persons.

12. A more cohesive and strategic approach was necessary to achieve sufficient international visibility of existing challenges and bring about significant change. In that connection, the Group welcomed resolution A/61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and supported the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem do Para Convention). UNIFEM, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women played a key role in supporting government efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Group invited the Secretary-General fully to support the proper functioning and revitalization of INSTRAW and its interaction with other agencies of the United Nations system, in accordance with their respective mandates. Member States should make voluntary contributions to the Institute's core budget.

13. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to the human rights of indigenous women, including the right to development; the right to improvement of their social and economic conditions; the right to educate their children within their own culture, language and traditions; and the right to live in peace and security. The process of system-wide coherence within the United Nations should reflect the needs of the developing countries and the requirement for consistency and coordination within the system. In view of the feminization of poverty, it was necessary to increase economic opportunities for women to ensure their participation in decision-making related to the control of resources. Regarding South-South cooperation on the advancement of women, the Rio Group hailed the first Iberoamerican conference on gender and social cohesion, held in Santiago, Chile, in October 2007.

14. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that Colombia consistently took the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination

of Discrimination against Women into account in the formulation of its policies and strategies with respect to women. Having signed the Convention in 1982 and ratified the Optional Protocol in 2007, Colombia had presented its combined fifth and sixth periodic report in January 2007, providing a detailed assessment of progress made in the advancement of women and the challenges that remained.

15. The national development plan covering the period 2006 to 2010 guaranteed continuity in the implementation of effective strategies such as the policy on affirmative action, which gave priority to the achievement of goals in employment and business development, education and culture, political participation and the prevention of violence against women. A strategic plan for the protection of women's rights included more than 100 measures to be applied by various public authorities in order to protect women in areas ranging from domestic violence to discrimination in the labour market.

16. The adoption of gender mainstreaming policies by all State agencies had led to the development of a series of laws, jurisprudence and public policies with a gender perspective and the consolidation of sex-disaggregated information systems. Within the Social Reactivation Policy, four structural strategies promoted greater gender equality: human capital development and employment; consolidation of the social protection system; the network for comprehensive attention to the population living in extreme poverty and the promotion of microcredit.

17. Due to a number of factors, including new legislation on quotas, the representation of women in public office continued to grow steadily. As a result of an agreement to encourage diversity and inclusion signed by the political parties, women could expect to occupy a greater number of elected posts in the municipalities and departments in elections scheduled for October 2007.

18. Female-headed households in rural areas were particularly vulnerable to poverty. In response, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development had implemented a social management policy, which included programmes to support rural microenterprises, productive partnerships, a Development Fund for Rural Women and special consideration to women in subsidy programmes for rural housing and land reform. Nevertheless, in order to improve its results, international cooperation should be strengthened in the area of poverty reduction, including actions aimed at rural women.

19. The report of the Secretary-General (A/62/177) contained meaningful recommendations on violence against women migrant workers. As a State party to the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and as a country of origin for migrants, Colombia valued the efforts of the United Nations in promoting broader ratification of that Convention, especially by the main destination countries, in order to strengthen guarantees for the rights of migrant women.

20. Colombia also took note of the report on the activities of UNIFEM (A/62/188) and recognized its contribution to institutional strengthening at the national level in the areas of women and gender. The Fund had contributed to the incorporation of a gender perspective into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Colombia, adopted in July 2007. The Government also attached special importance to the work of INSTRAW and believed it was essential for INSTRAW to be included in the United Nations discussions on gender architecture. Through effective and coordinated cooperation, the United Nations could help Member States to strengthen national structures to advance the cause of women and to promote poverty eradication and the achievement of other MDGs. The discussions on gender architecture should fully diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of the system and seek to strengthen cooperation with States. Open and inclusive intergovernmental consultations and agreement among States on that issue were primary conditions to ensure that the proposed model would be regarded as legitimate and effective.

21. **Ms. Al-Mansour** (Qatar) said that many gains and successes had been accomplished for Qatari women as a result of the constant efforts dedicated to their empowerment, their role in development and their participation in all walks of life. Qatar's overall approach to those issues was that the advancement of women went hand in hand with the advancement of all family members. Its new five-year national strategy for the family therefore incorporated a specific plan designed to enhance the status of women by empowering and promoting their role in society, bearing in mind the equal rights and obligations of men and women enshrined in the Qatari Constitution.

22. As it was, the situation of Qatari women had already improved within a very short space of time; they now had the right to vote and stand in elections, for instance, and occupied influential positions of leadership, including as ministers, particularly in areas relating to the family, women and children. Top posts in universities and in investment and policymaking bodies were also held by women, a situation that was moreover set to continue, not least in view of the new tendency for women to be armed with education qualifications. On account of such developments, women's concerns were expected to assume higher priority than was previously the case in all policies, plans and programmes. Women were additionally moving away from more traditional occupations and into the economic, governmental and non-governmental sectors. A standing electoral commission had also been formed with the aim of promoting women's participation as both candidates and voters in the next parliamentary elections. Qatar in fact supported all efforts designed to further the effective participation of women overall in the interests of social development.

23. **Ms. Graham** (South Africa) said that in assessing progress in gender equality and the advancement of women, the General Assembly should first recognize how much further it had to go before achieving full empowerment and gender equality. Poverty, underdevelopment and all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls were among the remaining challenges. The international community should continue to work in partnerships to implement programmes to push back the frontiers of poverty and underdevelopment in rural and urban areas and progress more swiftly towards gender equality in society as a whole. Men and boys played an important role in that regard.

24. Since the establishment of democracy in 1994, the Government of South Africa had endeavoured to create a truly non-racial and non-sexist society. Great strides had been made in promoting equal representation of women at all levels of Government, largely through the work of the Office on the Status of Women and the Commission on Gender Equality. Gender parity in primary and secondary education had been achieved, and a gender perspective had been mainstreamed in development by ensuring that women were integrally involved in the design and implementation of development projects and programmes.

25. South Africa was committed to assisting the African Union in establishing continental structures for development; it had worked within the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to strengthen regional economic integration and through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to expedite development by harnessing skills and resources in the pursuit of common goals. It was a key challenge to transform those activities into economic growth and development for the benefit of women and to guarantee the means and opportunity for them to make a contribution.

26. South Africa was also active in peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives for conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. In the process of implementing those initiatives, the Government of South Africa ensured that women were not marginalized, but that they held their rightful place at all stages of conflict resolution and in all spheres of life.

27. Although much progress had been made in facing the challenges of promoting the status of women and gender equality at the national level, there was also a need to enhance international cooperation and global partnership, and to realize the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other international commitments. Commitments with respect to official development assistance (ODA) and debt relief must be honoured since such resources were critical to the elimination of gender disparities and violence against women and girls.

28. **Ms. Abdelhak** (Algeria) said that although the situation of women had improved in some countries, overall it remained inferior to that of men. Violence against women affected the physical and mental health of victims and was an impediment to equality and social cohesion. The protection of the rights of women had attracted increasing attention, but violence against women had barely declined. The Government of Algeria was determined to combat violence against women through legal provisions that protected them and criminalized sexual harassment. In cooperation with civil society, it had also formulated a national strategy aimed at mobilizing the resources needed to protect women and raise public awareness.

29. Outlining a number of measures designed to promote the emancipation of women in Algeria, she stressed that the process of bringing national legislation in line with the provisions of international instruments was a top priority. In the area of education, she said that in less than a generation, equal access to education at all levels had been achieved, and the enrolment of girls now exceeded that of boys at secondary and higher levels. The gap between the participation of men and women in the workforce and wage discrepancies had gradually narrowed, as women had become increasingly better educated, more widely represented in key areas of public service, including education, medicine and the judiciary, and in business ventures. In addition, the Government actively encouraged rural women to enhance their economic and social influence through broader participation.

30. **Mr. Pham Hai Anh** (Viet Nam) said that his delegation had noted with appreciation the intensification of efforts by various entities of the United Nations system to combat violence against women, in particular through the timely establishment of the United Nations Task Force on Violence against Women and the launch of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. He endorsed the Secretary-General's global campaign on violence against women, and said that the in-depth study on violence against women remained as relevant as ever. Concerted and unswerving efforts must be undertaken comprehensively to address that challenge.

31. The twelfth session of the Vietnamese National Assembly was currently discussing various provisions of a draft law on domestic violence with a view to preventing and punishing acts of domestic violence, particularly those perpetrated against women and children. The draft law also sought to protect and assist victims of violence, with due consideration given to elaboration of long-term solutions.

32. As defined in the 2006 Law on Gender Equality, gender mainstreaming was implemented through the policies and activities undertaken by all Government bodies. In recognition of the fact that gender equality and the advancement of women were crucial elements in the nation's socio-economic development, Viet Nam's comprehensive approach to poverty reduction and growth had been the most gender responsive strategy to date, and the current socio-economic development plan was the first of its kind to incorporate gender perspectives. Based on the national strategy and the five-year national plan of action for the advancement of women, the Government ministries and agencies in 64 provinces were elaborating local plans of action in order to reach national targets. The committees for the advancement of women, established in all ministries, agencies and local government bodies, were actively advising and assisting the heads of those agencies to mainstream gender perspectives.

33. Vietnamese women continued to play an active and important role in decision-making processes at all levels, comprising 25.76 per cent of deputies of the National Assembly and over 23 per cent of members of People's Councils at the provincial and district levels.

34. In order to achieve gender equality and the advancement and socio-economic development of women, particular attention should be paid to women in especially difficult situations, including women in rural areas. The plan of action on the advancement of women aimed at reducing the proportion of poor female-headed households by 50 per cent by providing access to loans under the national poverty reduction programme and ensuring access to loans from the social policy bank. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development had taken steps to coordinate the efforts of agencies, organizations and individuals to achieve gender equality in all aspects of rural life. In parallel with the national trend, women in rural areas were becoming increasingly active in making decisions for themselves and their communities.

35. Providing for the basic needs of rural women, such as access to infrastructure, land, finance, health care and education, continued to be accorded high priority in various norms, programmes and projects devised by the Government. The goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly would become a reality for women everywhere only if consistent and concerted efforts were undertaken at all levels, with due consideration to women in special circumstances.

36. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that the advancement of women was critical, not only as a fundamental human rights issue, but also as a precondition for successful peacebuilding, sustainable progress in the global fight against poverty and the general health and well-being of all peoples. It was disappointing that despite some progress, full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and

Platform for Action continued to fall short of commitments. The international community must remain vigilant and active in its efforts in favour of women's rights and gender equality.

37. He renewed Iceland's commitment to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, and said that the Committee monitoring its implementation had made a meaningful contribution to the promotion of equality worldwide. The work of the Commission on the Status of Women was also commendable, and he looked forward to upcoming discussions on key issues in financing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

38. The United Nations played a central role in addressing violence against women through global advocacy, leadership and its operational work at the national and regional levels. In that context, his delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/62/201, on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, and the attention paid to the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women.

39. He underscored the importance of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and said that his Government was drafting an action plan to integrate that resolution into the policy and work methods of the Icelandic Crisis Response Unit.

40. In order for the United Nations to make an effective contribution to the advancement of women and gender equality, it must be able to play its normative and operational role in a coherent and coordinated manner. Iceland therefore welcomed the establishment of the Inter-Agency Network for Women and Gender Equality in the hope that greater and more coherent focus would be placed on the importance of empowerment and gender equality. However, Iceland still believed that the existing United Nations structures and approaches to gender issues were fragmented and did not appropriately reflect the importance of the matter at hand. His Government supported the establishment of a new gender entity to strengthen the performance of the United Nations in that regard. His delegation hoped that an Under-Secretary-General responsible for gender equality would soon be appointed in order to enhance leadership and coordination of gender issues within the system.

41. Experience had shown that there were strong links between women's empowerment and poverty reduction. The advancement of women and their rights should therefore be a central theme in all development efforts aimed at poverty eradication. That approach was duly reflected in Iceland's development cooperation policy, which attached central importance to the advancement of women. UNIFEM had been a key partner in that regard. He was therefore pleased to announce that the Government of Iceland would double its current contribution to the Fund, representing a thirty-fold increase in Iceland's contribution to UNIFEM since 2003 and ranking Iceland among the top donors to the Fund.

42. **Mr. Rachkov** (Belarus) said that gender equality and increasing the rights of women was a priority for his Government. Belarus had already carried out two five-year plans of action to promote gender equality and was embarking on a third. Particular attention was being given to improving the situation of women at the workplace and to promoting the employment of women in areas traditionally reserved for men, especially in Government and senior corporate management. Women already held powerful positions in the Presidential administration, the Parliament, large companies and other institutions. Civil society, including some 20 women's organizations, was also actively involved in eliminating discrimination against women. Given the 1 per cent unemployment rate in Belarus, women had relatively little trouble finding employment. However, his Government was facing the challenge of bridging the income gap between men and women; women earned on average 80 per cent as much as men. Nevertheless, women enjoyed a high level of education and were well represented in institutions of higher education and the sciences.

43. His Government also gave special attention to reproductive health. It had the lowest infant mortality rate in the CIS, and its rate of maternal mortality was in keeping with that of developed countries. It was making robust efforts to combat trafficking in women and children and provided assistance to the victims of such trafficking. Legislation had been enacted to provide for their safety and rehabilitation. The State bore the main responsibility for providing medical, psychological and social support to victims of trafficking, as international and non-governmental

organizations were not capable of doing so on their own. Belarus called for greater coordination of international efforts to combat human trafficking. It urged Member States to begin drafting a strategy to combat that modern form of slavery and stood ready to contribute to that important undertaking.

44. **Ms. Banna** (Iraq) said that women's rights were a main issue of international concern and were enshrined in various international instruments, yet discrepancies between the rights of women and men persisted worldwide. In the case of Iraq, few concrete results had been achieved in the past few years owing to the exceptional circumstances and successive conflicts which it had experienced. Iraqi women now had a broader base of participation in public life, however, involved as they were in political power and decision-making as parliamentarians and from ministerial positions. Moreover, with the establishment of the country's first effective women's organizations, they had been able to prove their worth and their capacity to meet challenges through their assumption of important responsibilities. Those organizations had played an active role in women's advancement by developing gender-analysis skills and gender-mainstreaming tools, as well as by assisting the relevant national institutions better to serve the cause of women and families.

45. In Iraq's current reconstruction phase, women assumed and aspired to ever greater responsibilities, which demanded not only their empowerment but also freedom from threats to their security and enjoyment of their inalienable rights. The Iraqi Government was therefore assiduously reviewing all laws and legislation, in particular those relating to women, to take account of the change in society. She called on all regional and international organizations to support women's institutions in Iraq and give priority to programmes that included components for the advancement of Iraqi women.

46. **Ms. Vikør** (Norway) said that her delegation welcomed initiatives to improve statistics on gender discrimination and strategies for its elimination. It therefore welcomed and supported the establishment of the gender, institutions and development database by the Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

47. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women must have the necessary tools to fulfil its mandate. The Committee itself had taken significant steps to enhance its working methods over the years. However, it would not be able to deal with an ever-increasing workload without being given the necessary time and the option of working in parallel groups. Her delegation commended the Committee on clearing much of its backlog, which would enable it to focus on States which had not yet submitted their initial report. It urged States which had not ratified or acceded to the Convention and its Optional Protocol to do so and called upon States parties to withdraw all reservations contrary to the purpose of the Convention.

48. Norway strongly supported the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women and the Stop Rape Now initiative. Effective measures must be taken to abandon harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation. Norway therefore welcomed the joint United Nations Population Fund-United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) programme to combat that practice and urged Member States to join in their efforts.

49. Norway welcomed the new targets set at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly under the Millennium Declaration, including full and productive employment and decent work for all, universal access to reproductive health care and universal treatment for HIV/AIDS.

50. The United Nations needed a stronger voice and more resources to make a difference for women on the ground. Norway was increasing its contributions to the existing gender mechanisms. It would also require the assistance of cooperation partners, Governments, international institutions and NGOs to ensure that increased focus on the advancement of women and gender equality led to real results.

51. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that her Government was aware of the crucial role played by women in economic and social development and had spared no efforts to work with civil society and non-governmental organizations to promote the advancement and safety of women. It had therefore adopted legal and administrative instruments to implement its commitments to promoting women's rights and the well-being of women. It had also ratified all the relevant international agreements concerning the elimination of discrimination against women. The Constitution guaranteed equality between men and women.

52. The President of Côte d'Ivoire had signed a solemn declaration on equal opportunities and gender equality, in which he made a commitment to ensuring that women filled at least 30 per cent public-administration and private-sector posts as well as political posts, particularly during elections, with a view to achieving gender parity as established in the Ivorian Constitution. Other measures included awareness-raising Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, training workshops in gender for local administrative and justice officials and meetings on peacebuilding in West Africa, women migrant workers and displaced persons in countries in conflict.

53. The Government had enacted legislation to combat violence against girls and women, including laws prohibiting female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and early or forced marriage. It had conducted awareness campaigns, strengthened its judicial system and established an early warning system to combat gender-based violence. Those measures could only succeed, however, in a climate of peace. His delegation therefore hoped that the Ouagadougou agreement would improve the situation of women in Côte d'Ivoire.

54. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino) said that, during its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, between November 2006 and May 2007, San Marino had joined the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence. At the national level, it had adopted a number of measures. A professionally operated hotline had been launched to assist women victims of violence who sought legal, medical or psychological support. The Government had sponsored a TV spot about violence against women, and public debates had been organized at the local level to discuss the problem. The involvement of minors in domestic violence against women had also been addressed. On International Women's Day, the Government had organized several events on the advancement of women and violence against women, with contributions from women who were distinguished in their own fields. A review of the Criminal Code had also been undertaken and an assessment made of the steps to be taken in order to reach full gender equality and full respect for women's rights. The outcome of the Campaign activities had turned out unexpectedly useful in assessing the situation and setting the country on a new path to improve the situation of all women.

55. **Ms. Muñoz de la Peña** (Chile) said that her delegation endorsed the conclusions of the thematic debate on gender equality and the empowerment of women organized in March 2007. It reiterated its appreciation for the work done by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. It reaffirmed its commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It therefore supported the transfer of the Secretariat of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and its proposed new working methods. Chile welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/143 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. It was committed to its implementation, including stricter penalties for violence against women and the provision of assistance to the victims of such violence. Her delegation noted the report of the Secretary-General on the same subject (A/62/201) and hoped that the Task Force on Violence against Women of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality would achieve its objective of initiating joint programming on violence against women in 10 pilot countries and elaborating guidelines on joint programming. It also supported the Secretary-General's global campaign on violence against women.

56. It was particularly concerned that MDG Goals 4 and 5 would not be achieved without increased national, regional and international efforts. It therefore welcomed the Global Business Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the World Health Organization Deliver Now Campaign. Her delegation supported reform of the gender architecture of the United Nations system and welcomed the appointment of a Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

57. Chile had taken steps at the national level to promote gender equality, including pension reform, preschool education, labour policy and other areas. Lastly, the inclusion of women's issues in national agendas was the best means of overcoming the invisibility of many women.

58. **Mr. Jeenbaev** (Kyrgyzstan) said that his Government was among the States which were fulfilling their obligations under the Beijing Platform for Action and had ratified more than 30 international human rights conventions and protocols. However, much more remained to be done to make the laws a reality. The Kyrgyz Constitution guaranteed equality between men and women and prohibited gender-based discrimination. The Government was taking steps to protect the rights of women and monitored progress towards achieving gender equality through gender-sensitive data collection which was updated every year. Analysis of those data informed the national gender policies, which sought to promote equal participation of men and women in decision-making positions, provide equal employment and business opportunities and health care protection, create an environment conducive to the active participation of men in childrearing and housekeeping and stop violence against women.

59. There were currently some 160 human rights and women's organizations operating in Kyrgyzstan. Almost 80 per cent of NGOs were headed by women. The Government had adopted a strategy for sustainable human development supported by the United Nations Development Programme, and national programmes were being conducted based on MDG 3. It also continued to enhance legislation to fulfil its international obligations in the area of gender equality and the advancement of women and had made considerable progress in improving their status. Women's issues would remain a top priority for Kyrgyzstan, and the Government would continue to build on its successes in that area.

60. **Mr. Loizaga** (Paraguay) said that more action should be taken on gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women at every level. Indicators reflecting the situation of women and practical recommendations for further action should be included in reports and documents issued by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women. United Nations entities should also use the outcomes of sessions of the Commission more effectively. His delegation supported the request by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for a further extension of its meeting time in order to reduce the backlog of reports awaiting consideration.

61. National and international efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women must be intensified. National capacities for data compilation, processing and dissemination must be strengthened so that the data could be used in national plans of action relating to violence against women. There should also be closer international cooperation on the establishment of women's shelters and training programmes. The challenges ahead remained daunting. States should, as a matter of urgency, undertake activities to improve the situation of rural women by training and raising the awareness of policymakers, community leaders and public officials. Rural women themselves, including indigenous women, should be consulted and their participation sought in the design, development and implementation of projects relating to gender equality and rural development. To that end, his delegation supported the adoption of an international day of rural women, in recognition of their economic contribution to the development of their communities.

62. The achievement of gender equality and respect for women depended on changing cultural attitudes. Unless a gender perspective was mainstreamed in national policies, with a full commitment to their implementation, their success would be limited. The establishment in Paraguay of the Women's Secretariat in 1992 had led to considerable success in gender-mainstreaming national policies, fighting for women's rights and working for amendments to civil, criminal, labour and electoral legislation. The Secretariat also prepared, implemented and monitored plans and programmes at local, national, and regional level. It provided advice on the establishment of women's organizations and worked for equality and non-discrimination at every level. Much remained to be done, but considerable progress had been made in promoting the human rights of Paraguayan women.

63. **Mr. Punkrasin** (Thailand) said that his Government had been working to achieve the target critical mass of 30 per cent women representatives in politics and to double the number of women in politics in Thailand. The Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development had engaged in activities to enhance awareness and encourage women's political participation in 75 provinces. Funds had been allocated to local women's organizations in every province, and a multisectoral subcommittee on women's participation in public life and administration, comprising academics, NGOs and the public sector, had organized

awareness-raising activities. Most importantly, the Election Commission had been persuaded to provide gender-disaggregated data on voters and successful and unsuccessful candidates. There was, however, a lack of specific information to support claims that increased participation by women would lead to greater effectiveness in administration. He therefore suggested that the United Nations should conduct a study on the impact of women's participation in decision-making. Only thus could Governments make informed decisions on the way forward or convince the general public of the importance of the issue.

64. One impediment to women's participation in decision-making was social attitudes towards women, but, unfortunately, the country's educational reform had not been specifically designed to change traditional attitudes. The reform principle had, however, adopted the learner-centred approach, which allowed for education to develop according to personal interests rather than stereotyped gender roles. Education had always been a priority for Thailand. The disparity between boys and girls in primary and secondary education had been eliminated, and the current goal was to achieve the same in tertiary education. Statistics from 1999 to 2001 indicated an increase in the number of female tertiary students in all fields, including some non-traditional ones, such as law, agriculture, forestry and fishery.

65. Women in rural areas contributed greatly to the country's social, economic and political development. Moreover, they were the repositories of traditional knowledge concerning the sustainable use of natural resources for food, medicine, textiles and energy. It was disappointing that, globally, the situation of rural women continued to deteriorate. In the belief that they should have the opportunity to generate remunerative non-agricultural employment, his Government had adopted such projects as the "Village and urban revolving fund", which provided villagers with loans to set up micro-businesses, and the "Village Bank", where credit loans were provided to men and women alike. Workshops were also being held to train and prepare women to be candidates in the forthcoming local elections.

66. His delegation remained committed to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Thailand had taken steps to harmonize national legislation with the provisions and principles of the Convention. It also continued to support the work of UNIFEM in Thailand and the East and South-East Asia region generally, including the regional forums that it had organized on men's role in ending violence against women and its activities to promote a better understanding of migrant workers.

67. **Ms. Salayeva** (Azerbaijan) said that rural women and girls in Azerbaijan largely faced the same challenges as those in other countries: low income and poverty, lack of adequate infrastructure and health care, limited access to education, early marriage and domestic violence. Such problems were accentuated by social stereotypes that impeded their overall development. The country's gender policy attached particular importance to the economic empowerment of women. Measures to increase economic opportunities for women, especially those living in rural areas, had been incorporated into all national development strategies.

68. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to launch a campaign to eliminate violence against women and girls, as set out in document A/62/201. She was pleased to inform the Committee that Azerbaijan's first national law on combating domestic violence had been drafted, with assistance from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the participation of national women's NGOs. In October 2006, the first national law on gender equality had been adopted and the State Committee for the family, women and children's affairs had been appointed to monitor its implementation and report annually to Parliament. One provision of the law was that national legislation should be scrutinized from the gender perspective. At the practical level, short- and medium-term measures to implement the new National Action Plan on family issues and gender equality were to be adopted.

69. Women and girls displaced as a result of the armed conflict with Armenia continued to suffer economic and social insecurity, as well as psychological trauma. The Government had adopted measures to improve the living conditions of refugees and internally displaced persons, provide access to education and health care and increase employment opportunities. National efforts should, however, be complemented by concerted action at international level. The needs and perspectives of women and girls affected by armed conflict must be mainstreamed into

international humanitarian and development projects and programmes.

70. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her country had prepared its second report on progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in which context it had strengthened the measures already in place. As a result of the attention thus devoted to women's issues in its five-year plans, both past and present, the gender gap had now diminished in such areas as basic education, non-agricultural occupations and membership of national legislative councils. The novelty of the current plan was that it incorporated mechanisms for measuring participation and for monitoring and evaluation in the light of international indicators and standards.

71. The Syrian Arab Republic had also submitted its first report on progress achieved in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and aired proposals for diminishing the obstacles faced in that connection. Moreover, as part of a newly instituted national plan to protect women from violence, a committee comprising governmental and non-governmental authorities and various experts had been formed to carry out activities aimed at fighting such violence through women's economic, political and cultural empowerment and exercise of their rights on an equal footing with men, as well as through examination of their responsibilities and obligations. Elaborated on the basis of findings from a poverty mapping project, a national scheme for poverty alleviation and the empowerment of women was also under way. A rural poverty map was being developed in addition, with particular focus on women, for whom literacy classes were provided in each of the country's 29 rural development centres.

72. Concerning women migrant workers, the recruitment and employment of all such workers was regulated in accordance with the relevant conventions on the subject, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, to which the Syrian Arab Republic had acceded in 2005. As for the Syrian women living under or displaced by the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan, they either received assistance through various special programmes in which the General Women's Union was actively involved or benefited from a law under which their home Government of the Syrian Arab Republic continued to pay salaries to school personnel. Indeed, the main challenge to ending the suffering of those women, including detainees in occupation prisons, and to achieving the empowerment of women in general, remained that of liberating the occupied Syrian Arab territories in the Golan and establishing a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of United Nations resolutions. It was similarly vital to banish the ongoing threat of aggression, the defence against which ate up resources that would otherwise be spent on development.

73. **Mr. Dall'Oglio** (International Organization for Migration) said that, while trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation was the most visible and prominent form of violence against women migrant workers, it was not the only one. Greater autonomy enjoyed by increasing numbers of women the world over meant that more women migrated independently of their families to pursue opportunities of their own; such women were still disproportionately affected by a variety of risks arising from their mobility. The crisis in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, for example, had brought to light the magnitude of the problems faced by women migrant workers as a result of unscrupulous recruitment mechanisms and exploitative labour practices. As many as half the 13,000 migrant workers evacuated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) — almost all employed as domestic workers — had irregular or undocumented status. Many instances of abuse, such as the withholding of passports, the breach of work contracts, the non-payment of salaries and the use of coercion, had been reported. Thus even women who avoided the trafficking networks were vulnerable working in gender-segregated sectors that were largely informal and unregulated. The risk was even greater for domestic workers, since their relative isolation further limited their access to health and social services or consular protection. Many women migrant workers also faced hazardous working conditions. Others were virtual prisoners in workshops, private homes or the dormitory-style housing provided by labour subcontracting companies. It was difficult for them to seek help, escape situations of exploitation and abuse or obtain legal redress. A recent IOM study in Cambodia had shown that female domestic workers were at high risk of being raped by male members of the household: as many as 10 per cent had been raped and up to 18 per cent had experienced attempted rape.

74. It was essential that policies on international migration should be gender-sensitive. Further action to reduce the vulnerability of women should be taken by informing migrant women workers of their rights in receiving countries; encouraging registration with consular authorities; training and appointing labour attachés to consulates who could advise and assist migrant women workers; promoting the adoption of human rights-based regulations for the employment of migrant workers, particularly women; ensuring that migrant workers had access to the same level of protection and safety at work as national workers; encouraging the recognition of qualifications between sending and receiving countries; campaigning for domestic workers' rights; monitoring the situation of women migrant workers in collaboration with State authorities and recruitment agencies; raising awareness of abusive practices among employers; and strengthening assistance networks in receiving countries. Breaking the cycle of violence against women, including women migrants, required active commitment by both State and non-State actors, including men and boys, and a change in attitude among families, communities and societies.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 16 October 2007, at 10 a.m.

***Chairman*: Mr. Ashiri (Vice-Chairman) .... (Japan)**

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In the absence of Mr. Wolf (Jamaica), Mr. Ashiri (Japan), Vice-Chairman, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 63: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/38, A/62/177, A/62/202 and A/62/290)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/173, A/62/201 and A/62/188)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)(A/62/178)

1. **Ms. Lowe** (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, said that Member States should continue working towards a strengthened, coherent gender architecture for gender equality and the empowerment of women in all entities of the United Nations system. She welcomed further discussion on progress towards the implementation of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1), noting the General Assembly's important role in ensuring that meaningful follow-up was undertaken by the various stakeholders.

2. Reaffirming her country's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/62/178) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, she said that the international standards laid down in them were a constant benchmark for the fulfilment of women's rights. Those Member States which had not ratified the Convention should give ratification serious consideration and continue work on implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

3. **Ms. Khvan** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation supported the Organization's approach to gender issues overall, but believed that action should focus on areas where hidden or overt discrimination persisted, particularly in the economic and political spheres. Although the fragmented nature of the existing gender architecture did lead to duplication of work, the Russian Federation was not convinced that a new body was needed. The issue required further study and broad consultations.

4. The Russian Federation welcomed the outcome of the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The constructive spirit of the deliberations boded well for the Commission's reform process. The advancement of women in decision-making was a topical issue, including for the Russian Federation. Women headed two of the most important federal ministries: the Ministry of Health and Social Development and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. The governor of the key constituency of St. Petersburg was also female. A number of women occupied posts as deputy ministers and State Secretaries, and the representation of women at the regional executive level was much greater.

5. The Government was prioritizing the realization of full gender equality and had established a Commission on Gender Equality in 2006 to that end. That body had approved the national gender strategy, which aimed to achieve equality in the social, economic, educational and cultural fields. A project for introducing gender-based approaches was being developed in line with agreed international instruments and with the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the Academy of Public Administration. Lastly, her country would continue its active work in the Commission on the Status of Women aimed at ensuring further reform, updating its agenda and enhancing its effectiveness.

6. **Mr. Sen** (Turkey) said that the elimination of discrimination against women and the strengthening of gender equality were among his Government's main priorities. To that end, Turkey had been taking serious legal and administrative measures, including the Ninth Development Plan for 2007-2013, which placed special emphasis on education, training and employment opportunities for women. In the last general elections, 48 women had been elected to Parliament. Although that figure was far from satisfactory, it reflected a significant increase compared to the previous term.

7. Turkey had hosted two important meetings on the rights of women in 2006: the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on "Strengthening the role of women in society", held on 14-15 November in Istanbul, which adopted a Framework of Action; and the First Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in the Development of Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Member States, held on 20-21 November in Istanbul. Those two conferences, which had brought together representatives from

various States and regions, as well as from international governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), had made an important contribution towards the advancement of women throughout a large geographical area.

8. **Mr. Acharya** (India) said that the focus after the 2005 World Summit had rightly shifted to the identification of sources for funding gender programmes. While the primary responsibility for that lay with the country concerned, the international community should live up to its commitment by providing new and additional financial resources, as well as transferring technology and sharing of expertise. There was an urgent need for legislative and policy measures to ensure the greater empowerment of women and to address the continued violation of the rights of the girl child.

9. The lack of knowledge among senior managers in the United Nations system, including resident coordinators, about ways to operationalize gender mainstreaming policies was a matter of concern. It was vital to achieve 50/50 gender distribution in the United Nations, especially at senior and policymaking levels, and the Government of India supported the strengthening of gender mainstreaming accountability frameworks.

10. Gender equity and equality had been a key guiding principle of the National Common Minimum Programme of the Government of India. In 2005, the former Department for Women and Child Development had been upgraded to a Ministry. Furthermore, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women continued to play a crucial role in monitoring the application of gender equality principles in legislation. The reservation of one third of urban and local self-government seats for women had also marked a turning point in India's efforts to empower women. In order to reduce the female poverty ratio by 5 per cent by 2007 and 15 per cent by 2012, a number of results-oriented programmes had been initiated in India, including a National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme and initiatives to set up women's self-help groups.

11. Government initiatives for gender equality had been backed up by the higher judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court of India, which had addressed issues of concern to women in several ways. Another crucial step in gender mainstreaming had been the institutionalization of gender-sensitive budgeting. In 2005, the Indian Parliament had enacted the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, marking a milestone in that area. Lastly, India looked forward to the Secretary-General's global campaign on violence against women, to be launched towards the end of 2007 (A/62/201) and was also honoured to have sent the first Female Formed Police Unit to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

12. **Mr. Petranto** (Indonesia) said that violence against women remained one of the most persistent human rights violations and that it was distressing that a culture of impunity still existed in many parts of the world. The growing number of women migrant workers, who made up almost half of all migrants worldwide, had brought the issue of gender violence to the fore. Only recently had policymakers recognized the particular challenges faced by women migrants, who were subjected to violence, discrimination, exploitation and abuse. It was the obligation of States to guarantee the rights of those workers and to incorporate preventive, anti-discrimination measures into their policies. Cooperation between sending and receiving countries should be constantly reviewed.

13. It was essential that the United Nations reform process should include a strengthening of the gender architecture within the system and enhance national efforts to implement comprehensive approaches towards the advancement of women. In that respect, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) had played an important role.

14. At the national level, Indonesia had always placed a high priority on respect for and the promotion of women's rights in its legislation. The most significant recent measure had been the passing of Law No. 23 of 2004 on the elimination of domestic violence. At the 116th Parliamentary Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Bali in May 2007, it had been active in integrating gender issues into the discussions. The United Nations Climate Change Conference was due to be held in Bali in December 2007 and would provide an opportunity to address the issue of women's vulnerability. The delegation of Indonesia urged all stakeholders to incorporate gender considerations into national and international policies and programmes on climate change.

15. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nassar** (Observer for Palestine) said that 2007 marked the fortieth year of Israeli military occupation in the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The occupation had placed a particularly heavy burden on Palestinian women who struggled daily to ensure the well-being of their families. Palestinian women continued to face a unique and tragic situation that required the attention of the international community. Not only did they have to fight to achieve their inalienable human rights and freedom, but they also had to strive alongside the women of the world to play an active and effective role in their own society. Although the Palestinian Authority had established a Ministry for Women's Affairs, the Israeli occupation remained the major obstacle to women's social, economic and political advancement.

16. Israel's military assaults and raids on civilian areas in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had caused the displacement and homelessness of Palestinian women and their families, affecting all aspects of their lives and their ability to contribute positively to their society. The situation was particularly dire in the Gaza Strip, where 90 per cent of the besieged population lives under the poverty level. Urgent attention and assistance must be given to the people in the devastated Gaza Strip, especially the women, children and elderly, as they were the most vulnerable members of society.

17. The Palestinian people wanted peace and looked to the international community and international law as the guarantors of the peace to which they aspired. She wished to convey Palestine's deep gratitude to all the United Nations agencies and programmes and the many international organizations which continued to provide valuable and much-needed assistance to Palestinian women and their families.

18. **Ms. Sow** (Senegal) said that it was widely acknowledged that poverty was particularly acute among women in developing countries, especially in Africa. Women were the victims of all manner of discrimination, which hampered their social and political development. That included the persistence of sexist stereotypes, violence and abuse, and the tendency of families to marginalize pregnant teenagers or unmarried mothers. The few improvements made to their legal and social status only affected an educated minority of women.

19. Senegal had therefore adopted a number of economic and social strategies to respond to women's needs. They focused, for instance, on protecting pregnant teenagers and unmarried mothers, cutting maternal mortality by half, taking robust action to protect women against HIV/AIDS, spacing births to cut infant mortality, providing broader access to programmes to lighten the work of women, promoting savings, protecting women from sexual abuse and family violence, and increasing women's rights within the family.

20. At the institutional level, Senegal had taken account of the cross-cutting nature of the family in all its development programmes. It had also set itself the goal of helping women and providing optimal social assistance. Without political determination and stability, democracy and national solidarity, Senegal would not have been able to make such progress in the advancement of women. The effective promotion of gender equality could be achieved with the political commitment of all African leaders. An illustration of that had been the inclusion of gender-specific issues in the programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

21. **Ms. Makhumula** (Malawi) said that the majority of women in Malawi lived in rural areas. Women accounted for 70 per cent of all agricultural work and 80 per cent of food production for domestic consumption. The empowerment of women was a strong component of Malawi's poverty reduction efforts, with the Government committed to strengthening women's access to land and microcredit. The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was a prerequisite for implementing the Millennium Development Goals as well as the country's own Growth and Development Strategy.

22. Efforts were under way to ensure the domestic incorporation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women were proving a useful tool in that regard. Her delegation endorsed the proposal to further expand the treaty monitoring body's working time. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) should step up its efforts in providing high quality research on women's issues and raising the Institute's relevance

and visibility. The lack of data on the situation of rural women was a particular cause for concern.

23. Her Government recognized the importance of maintaining sustained action and devising more innovative strategies to increase the representation of women in male-dominated decision-making. Education remained the key for empowering women and shifting societal attitudes in that regard. Efforts continued to be made to ensure the equal access of girls and young women to all levels of education and to encourage girls to return to school after pregnancy. Women's health care was being strengthened, with more women accessing antenatal, postnatal and family planning services in both State and mission hospitals, as well as antiretroviral treatment. The country remained challenged, however, by the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS and a high maternal mortality rate of 984 deaths per 100,000 live births. A five-year national "road map" for the reduction of maternal mortality had been devised with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

24. Malawi continued to make progress in combating violence against women. Victim support clinics had been established in police stations to encourage more women to report gender-based violence, thus helping to track perpetrators. Shelters provided counselling, vocational training and grants for business start-up. Legislation on the prevention of domestic violence had also been promulgated. Lastly, Malawi remained committed to the advancement of women and gender equality and looked forward to increased international cooperation on the issue.

25. **Ms. Myo** (Myanmar) said that equal rights and equal participation of women in political, social, cultural and economic life were indispensable to the sustainable development of nations. She was pleased to report that girls enjoyed the same rights as boys in Myanmar's co-education system. The enrolment rate of girls at the primary and secondary levels was no less than for boys, while at the tertiary level, female students predominated. In the health sector, Government ministries were working with local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations system towards the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, and a programme had been launched to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

26. A national plan of action had been in place since 1996 to combat trafficking in persons and anti-trafficking legislation enacted in 2005 covered sexual exploitation, forced labour and slavery. Penalties ranged from a 10-year minimum sentence to life imprisonment. In Myanmar, sexual exploitation of women and girls was traditionally abhorred and all cases duly investigated. Perpetrators of torture and sexual violence were liable to 5 to 20 years imprisonment with hard labour.

27. In recent years, accusations of gang rape had been levelled against some Myanmar military personnel based on unfounded reports issued by anti-government and expatriate NGOs such as the Shan Women's Action Network, the Shan Human Rights Foundation and the Kareni Human Rights Group. Those far-fetched accusations had been repeated by so-called human rights organizations as part of a disinformation campaign against a sovereign country. Unscrupulous groups would go to any length to exploit the sensitive issue of violation against women. Lastly, international cooperation was essential to assisting developing countries in their efforts to advance the status of women. Her delegation thus called upon the international community to increase the level of official development assistance, especially for health and education.

28. **Ms. Al-Kasadi** (Yemen) said that, in the years since national unification in 1990, Yemen had seen many political, economic and cultural changes that had contributed to the advancement of women. Yemen's Constitution guaranteed women equal rights with men, and women's equal participation in political decision-making was encouraged by such measures as the recent allocation of 15 per cent of seats in Parliament to women. There were two women ministers in the current Yemeni Government, and women served as deputy ministers, members of Parliament, judges, ambassadors, soldiers and police officers. Over a quarter of the Yemeni workforce was female, with notable annual increases in their employment in the fields of government, health and education.

29. Yemen would be submitting its sixth national report on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2008. There were Government programmes to address women's poverty, violence against women and birth control. Maternal mortality had been reduced, and the Ministry of Health had issued a decision

prohibiting female circumcision at Government health facilities. Education was being made available to women as never before, in the hope of remedying the effects of denial of access to education in the past. A campaign to limit early marriage had resulted in steps being taken to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18. She wished to express the steadfast support of Yemeni women for Palestinian women who were being deprived of their rights as a result of the Israeli occupation. Development, peace and security could not be achieved without equal rights for women.

30. **Ms. Sipraseuth** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that her Government had spared no effort to promote gender equality with the support of the Lao Women's Union. It encouraged the women's movement to play an active role in national defence and socio-economic development and created an enabling environment to improve women's access to education, health-care services, vocational training and job opportunities. Lao women had achieved continued progress and were now a significant force in national development. They participated in high-level decision-making at the local and national levels, with women now accounting for 23 per cent of deputies in the current term of the National Assembly, compared to only 9.4 per cent in the previous one. Significantly, the Vice-President of the National Assembly was a woman from the Hmong ethnic group.

31. The National Commission for the Advancement of Women had helped the Government formulate a national strategy for the advancement of women for 2005 to 2010, which focused on enhancing women's participation in the implementation of the National Growth and Poverty-Eradication Strategy, promoting women's education, health and participation in decision-making and strengthening women's organizations. Her delegation wished to express its gratitude for the invaluable assistance provided by friendly countries and international organizations for national development and the advancement of women.

32. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) said that efforts to assist women in attaining their legitimate rights must be redoubled. That encompassed the comprehensive empowerment of women, which entailed not only equal opportunities for employment, salary, and rights, but also freedom from poverty and disease, total integration into the development process and into the fight against discrimination and racism on the basis of belief or faith. Her Government expressed its support for the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendation on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through gender-related United Nations bodies.

33. Issues relating to women, within the Organization or outside it, should not be limited to addressing deprivation of rights. Rather, the development-related aspects of women's rights should also be considered, within the framework of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Women were the nucleus of the family and thus of society, and they played a key role in sustainable development, international peace and security, and the development of respect for human rights, particularly in armed conflicts and under foreign occupation.

34. Egypt believed in women's role in development and was striving to realize women's political, economic and social empowerment, as women's development was a prerequisite for the comprehensive development and modernization of society. Institutions had been established to accomplish those goals, chief among them the National Council for Women. Also, a centre had been established to train women to participate in political life. Her Government was keen to integrate women's issues into all related public policies and strategies. Women's empowerment required the involvement of all government organs and institutions, as well as that of civil society.

35. Egypt had included the social dimension of gender in its national five-year plan (2002-2007). Her Government had also begun integrating gender issues and the fulfilment of women's developmental needs into its six-year national plan for economic and social development (2007-2012) after discussions with rural and urban women, in a bottom-up participatory decentralized approach. That allowed for bridging economic, social and cultural gender gaps, especially in rural areas where males were dominant. Egypt had advocated the establishment of the Organization of Arab Women under the League of Arab States and had also planned the holding of high-level regional summits to discuss financing for development as it related to gender equality.

36. **Mr. Bonavia** (Malta) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union, but wished to reiterate its view that any position taken or recommendations made regarding the

advancement of women should not create an obligation for any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health rights or services. The situation of both women and men in Malta had improved significantly thanks to the Government's continuous commitment to gender equality. The country had had legislation and national machinery in place since 2003 for the promotion and enforcement of gender equality. In 2006, legislation had been enacted on domestic violence, and a commission had been established to raise public awareness of the issue.

37. Malta also had standards for victim care facilities and practitioners and a comprehensive prevention and early intervention plan. Family friendly measures had been introduced, as had gender equality and work-life balance initiatives, inter alia within the civil service and judiciary. School textbooks had also been revised to eliminate gender bias, while harsher punishments had been introduced for trafficking in women and girls. Women had been appointed as judges and magistrates, and Malta had also appointed a female judge to the European Court of Justice. Meanwhile, an increasing majority of university students were female, including 57.4 per cent of graduates of the University of Malta in 2006. His country was committed to cooperating with the European Union and the wider international community for the advancement of women in all spheres.

38. **Ms. Tiendrébéogo** (Burkina Faso) said that a five-year national plan of action adopted in 2006 focused on enhancing women's participation in the country's social, economic, political and cultural development and ensuring the realization of all their rights. It sought to raise women's social status; promote their access to decision-making, education and training; improve mother-child health; combat female poverty through capacity-building and income-generating activities; and strengthen institutional mechanisms.

39. Burkina Faso had ratified several relevant international agreements including the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been translated into the three main national languages. The Government continued to work towards implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and was also working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to raise public awareness of the issue and to assist victims.

40. At the Pan-African Women's Day held on 31 July 2007, Burkina Faso had stressed the importance of women's entrepreneurship and the vital role of women in regional integration. The occasion had allowed women entrepreneurs and leaders to build on lessons learned, identify the main obstacles to women's advancement in Burkina Faso and propose new strategies. Three of Burkina Faso's 13 governors were women, as well as five of the country's 34 ministers and 17 of a total of 111 deputies. A quota had also been introduced to raise women's representation in the National Assembly.

41. Thanks to efforts made under the country's 10-year education strategy, some 61 per cent of girls were now enrolled in primary school. At the secondary and higher levels, the enrolment rates were 14 and 12 per cent respectively. Some 195 women had been trained in butter and soap production, and women's literacy had been strengthened with the establishment of 22 literacy centres and the organization of a public awareness and funding campaign. A review of national progress on women's issues had also been carried out to mark the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women. Encouraging results had been achieved thanks in part to development assistance, but poverty, inadequate resources, lack of education and low awareness among women of their rights continued to hamper national efforts. However, the Government was committed to creating an enabling environment for the advancement of women.

42. **Ms. Radu** (Moldova) said that, despite the importance of empowering women in advancing development, reducing poverty and guaranteeing the basic human right of gender equality, discrimination against women and girls remained the most pervasive and persistent form of inequality. The Constitution of Moldova and other normative acts stipulated the equality of all its citizens before the law. The Government had adopted a range of national plans and programmes and established institutional monitoring mechanisms to promote advancement of women, in the areas of achieving gender equality, combating human trafficking, ensuring equal work opportunities and providing assistance in reproductive health care and family planning.

43. However, as more needed to be done, her Government had established the Commission on Gender Equality. Aware of the importance of combating and preventing domestic violence, it had also approved a law on domestic violence in 2006. Migration was a significant process in society. However, migrant women were disproportionately affected by a number of risks arising from their mobility. Moldova relied heavily on remittances from migrant workers, which accounted for 27 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) — second-highest percentage in the world.

44. Often, migrant women either became victims of trafficking or were forced to endure poor working conditions and physical or psychological abuse. In order to protect the rights of migrants and victims of human trafficking, Moldova had signed and ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in May 2006. Moldova supported the idea of strengthening the United Nations gender architecture, as well as the establishment of a new gender entity that could harmonize the normative and analytical functions of the existing system with the technical, policy-setting role.

45. **Ms. Knight** (United States of America) outlined a number of recent Government activities on behalf of women worldwide. The Women Leaders' Working Group had met that September, bringing together women ministers, heads of State, ambassadors and chief executives officers to address issues relating to the advancement of women. Working Group members had proposed several initiatives, urging the Government of Burma to resume a path of dialogue and democracy and addressing issues such as poverty, trafficking in persons, women's situations in post-conflict societies in Africa, and women's political participation.

46. Her Government had focused on two aspects of violence against women that demanded greater attention: forced and early marriage, and sexual violence in conflict situations, including State use of rape to achieve military and political objectives. The United States had introduced a draft resolution that called for action by States, the United Nations system and civil society actors including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to address the problem.

47. Since 2005, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) had been implementing the Combating Violence Against Women Initiative, which had provided $16 million to address sexual violence in Darfur. Since 2001, the USAID Victims of Torture Fund had contributed more than $5 million to treat survivors of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United States Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief prioritized reducing violence and discrimination against women. The Plan mandated that the United States would support five high-priority gender strategies: increasing gender equity in HIV/AIDS activities and services; reducing violence and coercion; addressing male norms and behaviours; increasing women's legal protection; and increasing women's access to income and productive resources.

48. The United States Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration had been at the forefront of protecting and assisting refugees and victims of conflict, particularly refugee women and girls. Her Government had also increased funding to combat maternal mortality and obstetric fistula. With regard to trafficking in persons, there was already widespread awareness of trafficking for sexual exploitation, but many foreign Governments did not have the means to address trafficking for labour exploitation. The 2005 reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act had stressed the need to intensify the focus on trafficking for forced labour purposes.

49. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar), speaking on a point of order, said that his country's official name, Myanmar, should be used in references to it.

50. **Mr. Chidumo** (Mozambique) said that his country had adopted political, social and economic frameworks, in accordance with the Beijing Declaration, in order to protect and promote women's rights, one of the Government's top priorities. The Constitution of Mozambique provided for equal rights between women and men. Further, the country was signatory to several regional and international conventions and initiatives that aimed to promote equal rights between women and men, among them the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. His Government had presented its second periodic report, in fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention in May of that year. Mozambique had taken note of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and was committed to implementing them.

51. Mozambique had also established various entities to strengthen institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, including a National Council for the Advancement of Women and a Gender Coordination Group. A draft law against domestic violence had been drawn up, and police officers were being trained in women's rights and in providing assistance to victims of violence. More needed to be done, but steady progress was being made. Mozambican women were contributing to national development and becoming more prominent players in the political, economic and social spheres.

52. **Ms. Eilon-Shahar** (Israel) said that, 60 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaimed gender equality as an international standard, it was unfortunate that so much remained to be done. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remained a touchstone in discussions of women's development, along with the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, which called for the use of time-bound, measurable targets to assess progress.

53. Across much of the globe, the participation of women in the electoral process and in government lagged far behind that of men, a situation that should be addressed with urgency. National and international financing for development should acknowledge a gender perspective in real terms, through gender-specific projects or by engaging authorities to encourage women's participation in development. Israel's International Centre for Cooperation continued to play a part in the movement towards global gender equality, through activities in 108 countries.

54. Women in rural areas faced particular difficulties. Women were often the centre of family life in developing regions, caring for children and the elderly while producing the majority of staple crops to feed the family and bring in income. Yet, in spite of that central position, they lagged behind men in terms of wages, equality before the law and land rights. The major disparities between countries and regions in indicators of women's health and well-being painted a picture of their unequal power. Availability of health care for women was doubly important because they were generally the primary caregivers for young children.

55. Israel had enshrined the ideal of women's equality in its declaration of independence nearly 60 years earlier. Equality remained a work in progress, but the issue was at the centre of the national agenda. The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, operating within the Prime Minister's Office, had spearheaded a campaign to combat violence against women. New legislation on human trafficking provided for stiffer sentences and ensured that trafficked persons were treated as victims entitled to free legal counsel and shelter. The law also stipulated that funds confiscated from traffickers would be allocated for victim rehabilitation and protection.

56. Her country lay in a region that remained in turmoil, and women were its primary victims. In that respect, Israel was implementing various provisions of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and hoped that the increased role of women in negotiations to end conflict and in post-conflict peacebuilding would foster greater understanding and reconciliation. Women in government could be strong advocates for the rights of other women, and women who voted could put them there. Israel had no illusions that achieving gender equality would be simple. Cultural inertia and competing priorities tended to sideline the issue. But equality was a right among men and women, rich and poor, in developed and developing nations. The international community should demand no less.

57. **Mr. Margarian** (Armenia) said that his Government was implementing a national programme for the advancement of women based on its Constitution, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. The programme was intended to extend equal rights and opportunities, improve women's social and economic status, combat violence against women and trafficking and contribute to Armenia's poverty eradication strategy. The election laws had recently been changed to require one out of ten candidates on party lists to be women. In the May 2007 parliamentary elections, the number of women members of Parliament had doubled, from 6 to 12; although the number remained small, it signalled a trend that should continue. The pace of change was slower in the Executive Branch, with just one woman Minister. Women had reached virtual gender parity in the middle levels of the civil service, however, and were highly active in non-governmental organizations and civil society.

58. **Mr. Al-Saif** (Kuwait) said that he was pleased to note that women in Kuwait had participated in

elections in 2006, and would be granted full political rights. Furthermore, his Government had withdrawn its reservation to article 17 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. He did not claim that there were no shortcomings in the situation of women in Kuwait, but women did hold high-level posts in the Government, including those of two Cabinet Ministers, as well as positions on municipal councils and in the diplomatic service. Conflict was the main cause of violence against women, and special attention must be paid to women living under occupation, in the Syrian Arab Golan and other places in the world. Occupation must be ended in order to prevent the hatred that it created.

59. **Ms. Al-Shehail** (Saudi Arabia) said that her Government was taking measures for the advancement of women based on the principles of Sharia, which granted rights to women. In fact, the Bill of Rights in Saudi Arabia emanated directly from the Koran. Her Government attached great importance to the social and economic aspects of the family, in which women played a major role. Government ministries and the private sector were involved in women's employment schemes. Women were also making progress in education; in fact, 57 per cent of graduates were women, which guaranteed their increased participation in society and the labour market. Women represented 14 per cent of the overall workforce; their proportions were 30 per cent of the workforce in the public sector and 84 per cent in the education sector.

60. Saudi Arabia had signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2000, thereby demonstrating its agreement with the provisions of the Convention, and she reaffirmed its attachment to the provisions on women's human rights that it contained. Lastly, a number of women's development projects were under way, as the cornerstone of efforts to reinforce the status of women.

61. **Mr. Kleijssen** (Council of Europe) said that there had been a number of developments in the Council of Europe in the field of combating trafficking in persons, violence against women and the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. In 2006, the 47-nation Council had launched a campaign to combat trafficking in human beings highlighting measures to prevent that new form of slavery, protect the human rights of victims and prosecute traffickers. It also aimed at promoting the signature and ratification of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings for its early entry into force. No country was capable of defeating trafficking alone; the Convention provided a new tool to prevent and combat it more effectively.

62. It was impossible to speak of true equality between women and men as long as gender-based violence continued. Figures on the prevalence of violence were sobering: one fifth to one quarter of all women had experienced physical violence at least once during their adult lives, and more than one tenth had suffered sexual violence involving the use of force. The majority of such violent acts were carried out by men in their immediate social environment, most often by partners or former partners. Over the past decade the Council had taken a series of initiatives to improve the protection of women, including Recommendation 5 (2002) of the Committee of Ministers, which spelled out the obligation of States to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence, whether perpetrated by the State or private persons, and to provide protection for victims. Custom, religion or tradition could never be an excuse to permit violence against women. Sadly, such violence remained widespread in Europe, and was too often explained away as a family matter beyond the reach of public intervention. The Council's campaign to combat violence against women aimed at raising awareness and breaking the silence surrounding such abuse.

63. For the Council, the protection of children from all forms of violence, especially sexual violence, was a top priority. The July 2007 adoption of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse was a major step forward in the prevention of sexual offences against children, prosecution of perpetrators of such crimes and protection of victims. The Convention also addressed the issues of the "grooming" of children for sexual purposes and sex tourism. He hoped that many non-member States of the Council would be interested in signing the Convention as well.

64. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico) said that, although Mexico had made significant progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration, violence against women was a major obstacle to their full implementation, especially in marginalized sectors of society. Therefore, one of the keys to combating violence was the strengthening of education programmes from a gender perspective,

along with increased effectiveness in the justice system. In terms of increasing participation in decision-making, it was essential for women from such vulnerable groups as migrants, indigenous communities and those living in extreme poverty to be given greater visibility. His Government was thus joining other members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in observing the World Rural Woman's Day on 15 October.

65. Mexico firmly believed in the relationship between its multilateral commitments and domestic programmes to guarantee women's rights. The first case to be considered under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had, in fact, originated in Mexico. It had also recently adopted a number of laws in the area of violence against women and equal rights. Lastly, Mexico had expressed its concerns on a number of occasions regarding duplication of work, inefficiency and lack of coordination among the bodies involved in gender issues within the United Nations system. It urged a review of the existing gender architecture in order to make it more effective in carrying out its very important work.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe .... (Jamaica)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 63: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/38, 177, 202 and 290)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/173, 188 and 201)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/62/178)

1. **Mr. Kinyanjui** (Kenya) said that women were critical agents of change in development. In order to break the vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty, discrimination and violence against women, therefore, his Government had embarked on a systematic process of re-engineering social attitudes to gender equality through political, legislative, administrative and policy measures. A comprehensive review of the Constitution had provided an opportunity to enshrine gender equality in the basic law. Moreover, to ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues, the Government had established the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services and the National Commission on Gender and Development. Gender officers had been appointed to senior posts in ministries and other bodies to ensure the integration of gender perspectives in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of all development policies and programmes. Provision had also been made for women's rights organizations to nominate representatives for various commissions and boards. One third of all new appointments in the public service had been reserved for women.

2. Violence against women was abhorrent in all its manifestations. Not only did it abrogate the human rights of its victims, but a society in which such violence was tolerated could not optimize its potential for development. The Government had therefore enacted the Sexual Offences Act of 2006, which increased the penalties for rape and defilement. The Public Officer Ethics Act of 2003 prohibited sexual harassment in the workplace. The Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Bill had come before Parliament. The Children's Act of 2001 outlawed female genital mutilation and child marriages. The Government, civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had been engaged in raising awareness about the dangers of the former and administrative measures had been taken to stamp out both practices in communities where they were prevalent. A gender-specific police station had been set up in Nairobi to deal with women and children victims of violence, and gender desks had been established in police stations throughout the country. A special anti-trafficking police unit had also been set up.

3. In Kenya, 80 per cent of women lived rural areas and comprised 70 per cent of all employees in the agricultural sector. Yet, owing to customary practices, the ownership of land was almost exclusively vested in men. A national land policy had therefore been drafted, recommending that all laws, regulations, customs and practices that discriminated against women in land ownership should be outlawed. The Government had also established a women's enterprise fund, to which it had allocated KSh 2 billion in the current financial year to provide credit for women entrepreneurs.

4. **Mr. Mansour** (Tunisia) said that, despite all efforts, women regrettably still suffered from poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, pandemics and other constraints, not to mention discrimination, violence and trafficking. In particular, action must be taken to put an end to violence against women, which constituted not only a danger for the female gender but a denial of human dignity. His delegation therefore welcomed the multi-year system-wide campaign proposed by the Secretary-General to eliminate violence against women and girls.

5. The development process could not succeed in any country without the active participation of women and their direct involvement in the implementation of social, economic or political programmes. Since independence in 1956, Tunisia had shown its willingness to embrace the modern world, while retaining its traditional character. From the outset, however, it had been necessary to tackle a number of social taboos; a society in thrall to old traditions could not develop a development process worthy of the name. Thus August 1956 had seen the adoption of the Personal Status Code, which had outlawed polygamy and repudiation and introduced legal divorce. In other words, the archaic model, which had enshrined women's inferiority and flagrant sexual discrimination, had been replaced by a system under which women were equal partners. The effect of integrating women into political, economic, social and cultural development had been that Tunisia had become an open, moderate and balanced society. Various plans of action had resulted in the progressive emancipation of

women. Campaigns to tackle illiteracy, encourage birth control and introduce universal education had ultimately resulted in the gender mainstreaming of development plans and professional training. Women had achieved success as doctors, lawyers, judges, ministers, mayors or managing directors.

6. Women had come to be seen as a determining factor in the country's economic development, its social cohesion and its political stability. Access to employment remained one of the most effective measures to enhance women's economic independence and establish real equality between the sexes. In 2006, women had exceeded 25 per cent of the active population in Tunisia. The establishment of mechanisms providing women with access to sources of funding, including microcredits, had enabled them to make an effective contribution to the economy. Women should, however, be more closely involved in the information society. He urged the international community to recognize the value of information and communication technologies as a motor not only of development but also of the full integration of women into society.

7. **Mr. Park** Hee-Kwon (Republic of Korea) said that the empowerment of women would contribute not only to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but to the promotion of world peace and security. His delegation therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to spearhead a multi-year system-wide campaign to eliminate violence against women and girls. It also commended the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the "Stop Rape Now" campaign. Systematic rape and sexual slavery were not only the most egregious forms of human rights violations but also war crimes and, in some circumstances, crimes against humanity. Every effort must be made to prevent such atrocities and put an end to impunity. One way of doing so was to raise public awareness by promoting human rights education and ensuring the accuracy of accounts of historical events in educational curricula.

8. The gender perspective should be fully integrated in the United Nations system. The current structure of the Organization was, however, not adequate to that purpose. Strong leadership and coordination were needed. His delegation supported a new gender architecture which would unite normative and programme activities under a coherent mechanism, headed by an Under-Secretary-General. His delegation also commended the resolutions adopted at the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women on ending female genital mutilation and forced marriage of the girl child.

9. His Government had taken comprehensive measures to achieve the advancement of women. Remarkable progress had been made in attaining gender equality in the country's laws and institutions. The family headship system, which had enshrined legal discrimination against women, had been abolished. It had thus been possible for his Government to pursue the withdrawal of its reservation to 16, paragraph 1 (g), of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In pursuit of its commitment to gender mainstreaming, the Government had undertaken an analysis of the impact of gender on policy in central and local government, and the Statistical Act provided that gender-disaggregated data were a prerequisite for the approval of statistical data. In accordance with the National Fiscal Act of 2006, a gender-sensitive budget policy would come into effect in 2010. As for the participation of women in the decision-making process, significant progress had been made with the appointment in recent years of the first female prime minister and the first female minister of justice. The ratio of women representatives in the National Assembly had increased dramatically.

10. There had been a sharp rise in international marriages in the Republic of Korea. Such a situation presented new challenges, and efforts were being made to devise ways of protecting and supporting foreign wives. In 2006, the Government had established the Policy for Social Integration of Families with Migrant Women, in which the representatives of 12 ministries participated. A programme had also been launched, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to help female immigrants adapt to the Korean language and culture prior to their marriage.

11. **Mr. Christian** (Ghana) said that, after years of extensive consultation with all segments of Ghanaian society, the Domestic Violence Bill had passed into law in February 2007, marking another milestone in the Government's commitment to respect for human rights, and specifically the rights of women. The Ghana Police Service had set up domestic violence and victim support units throughout the country. Measures had

also been taken to ensure gender sensitivity in sectoral plans and programmes.

12. Rural women constituted 47 per cent of the farm labour force. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy estimated that food-crop farmers, of whom women constituted 55 per cent to 60 per cent, were the worst hit by poverty. The Government had taken measures to address the problem by providing credit facilities, improved technological services and skills upgrading in management and finance. Thanks to the micro- and small credit loans scheme, 70,000 women had received a total of some US$ 4 million worth of microcredit. The Ministry of Education had organized night schools to make rural women functionally literate. It had also initiated a drive to encourage school enrolment for girls; a school-feeding programme introduced in 2006 had increased primary school enrolment, especially among girls in rural areas.

13. Discussions were under way on the abolition of outmoded customary practices that prevented women from owning or acquiring land. A dialogue was also continuing with the traditional authorities on the mainstreaming of gender into the Land Administration Project, which sought to reform the land tenure system. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs had initiated a bill to facilitate the registration of property by women.

14. Reproductive health services had been integrated into the general health-care system. As a result of that and other policies, such as free antenatal, delivery and post-natal care, women had been introduced to family planning and seen an overall improvement in their health. Other improvements had resulted from the introduction of the national health insurance scheme and the community-based health planning services.

15. A recent survey conducted by the Ghana Statistical Survey indicated that poverty had diminished considerably in rural areas. The proportion of the population living on the breadline had fallen from 50 per cent in 1991 to 39.5 per cent in 1998 and 28.5 per cent in 2005. It was hoped that the downward trend would continue.

16. Informal observations indicated that literacy programmes and legislation had also resulted in impressive reductions in female genital mutilations, discrimination against widows, violence against women, ritual slavery and trafficking in women and children. With regard to gender-based violence in situations of conflict, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, an alarming upward trend had been noted. Although several United Nations peace support operations were mandated to monitor human rights violations, there needed to be complementary capacity and leadership in the field and at Headquarters to ensure accountability for implementing such mandates. The Security Council should develop a mechanism to ensure the systematic implementation of its resolution 1325 (2000), the adoption of which had constituted a groundbreaking step towards women's advancement.

17. **Ms. Medal** (Nicaragua) said that, since the Sandinista revolution in 1979, women had played an increasingly important role in Nicaragua. The Government had set a target of 50 per cent participation by women during its term of office. Equality between men and women was enshrined in the Constitution, as was the States' obligation to remove obstacles to such equality in practice or to active participation in political, economic and social life. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been incorporated into Nicaraguan law, and the country had recently submitted its sixth yearly report under the Convention. The Government had set itself the objective of ensuring equality between the sexes by means of a vigorous gender policy, under which affirmative action would be taken to encourage women's participation in industry and public administration. The policy placed an equal value on the skills of women and men; it was impartial in promoting participation by both sexes in senior posts and in training for further qualifications. It also advocated equal pay for equal work.

18. The Zero Hunger programme aimed to eliminate poverty, particularly among women, who were the drivers of economic development within their families and within society generally. Low-interest microcredit and agricultural machinery acquired thanks to agreements reached with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had gone to cooperatives led by women.

19. The Policy for the Promotion of Employment and Decent Work aimed at improving the efficiency of the labour market and achieving decent working conditions in respect of the minimum wage, social security, health and safety at work, labour migration and the productive use of remittances, the channelling of social expenditure into poverty reduction, compliance with basic rights at work and strengthening of social dialogue. The economic empowerment of women had

also been given impetus by the Women and Local Economic Development Project. As far as working conditions were concerned, it had been found that globalization had given rise to atypical forms of employment frequently associated with precarious employment conditions. In order to establish the effect of economic restructuring on women's lives, an inquiry had been held into the flexibility of the labour market so as to establish precisely the challenges that Nicaragua faced.

20. Other achievements included the appointment of the Ombudsman for Women, within the office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, with the task of developing procedures to empower women and promoting the exercise of democracy. There were five women ministers in the Government and about 60 organizations engaged in promoting and protecting women's rights and campaigning for their interests. Mention should also be made of the success achieved by the National Police, which, headed by a woman First Commissioner, had incorporated a cross-cutting gender focus in the modernization of the police.

21. Nicaragua had a national plan for the prevention of domestic or sexual violence, run by the National Commission to Combat Violence against Women, Children and Youth. The Government laid particular emphasis on the importance of recognizing, without discrimination, the fundamental rights of indigenous women and women of African descent.

22. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia) said that inequality in many societies, including Namibia's, could best be addressed through gender empowerment programmes. Accordingly, his Government promoted entrepreneurial skills and employment opportunities for women and provided infrastructure to improve the marketing of rural women's produce. A higher standard of living for women would reduce the country's Geni coefficient, which was among the highest in the world, and thereby transform Namibian society. His delegation appealed to Namibia's development partners to increase their support for such programmes and called on the private sector to view women as local partners in investment ventures.

23. As a result of the advancement of women in politics and social affairs in the late twentieth century, many women currently occupied strategic positions in Governments and in the private sector. In Africa, a woman had been elected president and several women held ministerial posts. His own country had produced a deputy prime minister and several key ministers. Yet much remained to be done in order to attain a leadership composition commensurate with women's numerical and qualitative strength. In fact, a new political culture of openness, tolerance and accountability was necessary.

24. Gender-based violence, an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace, impaired the enjoyment of women's fundamental human rights. In the case of Namibia, the relevant statistics showed that the efforts to address the phenomenon left much to be desired. The "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence (25 November-10 December 2007)" preceding the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women should have a lasting effect. Men's participation in the effort to curb gender-based violence could be effective in overcoming the existing gender imbalances and inequalities. United Nations bodies should ensure that Member States met their commitments in that area, facilitated the sharing of relevant experience, assisted in mobilizing resources and led by example through greater use of women's knowledge and expertise at senior posts in the United Nations system.

25. **Ms. Bungudu** (Nigeria) said that, since the landmark Beijing Platform for Action adopted in 1995, global efforts had been made to narrow the gender gap. However, persisting challenges included unequal access to productive resources, gender bias in laws on property and inheritance, women's inadequate access to education, unequal distribution of resources within the family, violence and discrimination against women and women's insufficient participation in decision-making.

26. The Nigerian Government had taken steps to improve conditions for women. National bodies promoting entrepreneurial development through the social and economic empowerment of women included the agency implementing the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP). SMEDAN focused on rural women and NAPTIP consistently served as a deterrent to trafficking in human beings.

27. The Government's bold steps to ensure women's participation in development had resulted in the adoption of a national gender policy framework. An executive bill proposing the incorporation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into Nigerian law had been placed before the National Assembly. The Government had increased women's participation in the Federal Executive Council from 8.2 per cent to 19.2 per cent. Women headed the Ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs and the Environment, the Civil Service of the Federation and various key committees in the National Assembly, where women's representation had increased. Moreover, the chief executives of the Nigeria Stock Exchange, the Federal Inland Revenue Service, the Governing Board of Nigerian Banks, the Bureau of Public Enterprises and the Millennium Development Goals Office in Nigeria were women.

28. Nigeria's ongoing educational reforms focused on promoting the education of the girl child by raising the enrolment and retention rates for girls in the rural areas through enhanced education infrastructure and special incentives for girl child education. In the area of violence against women, the Government collaborated closely with law enforcement agencies and had set up a temporary shelter for women victims of violence.

29. **Mr. Jang Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his Government had promulgated the law on equality of men and women in 1946 and liberated women from all types of social inequality and discrimination, ensuring that women participated in politics, the economy, culture and social life on an equal footing with men and perfecting policies to guarantee women's rights. Women were highly regarded and were considered the driving force for one half of the revolution and a valuable asset. They could develop their talents and fulfil their aspirations in all areas of social life. As a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea made every effort to fulfil in good faith its international obligations regarding the protection and promotion of the human rights of women.

30. Although the Japanese imperial army had violated women's human rights by forcibly drafting 200,000 women from Korea and several other Asian countries as "comfort women", the current Japanese authorities refused to make amends for that crime, which had constituted one of the biggest human trafficking and human rights violations in the twentieth century. The Japanese authorities were even trying to strike that fact off history textbooks. More than half a century after the war, the survivors of that crime and the souls of its victims appealed to the conscience of mankind to ensure that such atrocities should never happen again. The Japanese authorities should accept responsibility for the "comfort women" issue and fulfil their obligations accordingly.

31. **Mr. Emadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that women faced various manifestations of violence, ranging from trafficking, domestic violence, discrimination and sexual abuse to situations arising from foreign occupation and armed conflict. In many parts of the world, women were trapped in a cycle of poverty that bred violence. Dealing with those issues, particularly the need for poverty eradication, should be a top priority for collective effort.

32. The policy implemented by the Islamic Republic of Iran with a view to improving the status of Iranian women and broadening their roles to ensure their active participation in the country's economic and social development was guided by the principle of gender justice in education, health, employment and politics. Currently, women accounted for more than 30 per cent of the national labour force — a proportion that had increased by 2.6 per cent since 1996. Women's rate of participation in the economy had reached 14 per cent, a national record. Moreover, women's literacy rate had increased from 25 per cent in 1976 to 76 per cent in 1997 and 78 per cent in 2007. In recent years, more female than male applicants had been accepted into universities. Iranian women's participation in social and political affairs had considerably increased in 10 years. Currently, more than 20 groups and parties were active in women's affairs, while nine NGOs dealing with women's human rights enjoyed consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Lastly, networking and partnership capacity-building activities had been launched in order to promote women's participation in Government, Parliament and local administration.

33. **Ms. Ng Li San** (Singapore) said that Singapore was a small nation with no natural resources; human capital was its only asset and women were an integral part of that capital. Since education was fundamental to individual development, the Government had always been committed to providing boys and girls with equal

access to education. At a time when traditional attitudes about female roles had predominated, primary education had been made compulsory for all and secondary education made more easily accessible. Even in tertiary education, female students had never been handicapped or discouraged. In 2006, women had comprised almost half the student population in tertiary education.

34. Education had paved the way for women to seek gainful and fulfilling employment, and their aspirations had risen correspondingly. Women were making huge inroads into leadership positions in the public, private and non-profit-making sectors. Such advances had also, however, brought challenges. For example, women contributed almost half the income of two-income households, with the result that married couples often found it difficult to strike a balance between work and family. One manifestation of that was falling birth rates. With promising careers and financial independence, more women were staying single or marrying later. Such choices had to be made by individuals, but there were serious implications and the Government had set up an interministerial committee, chaired by a deputy prime minister, to encourage marriage and parenthood. Ultimately, however, Singapore couples would have to make their own decisions.

35. **Ms. Amin** (Ethiopia) said that, as 85 per cent of the Ethiopian population lived in rural areas, her Government gave priority to rural development. In particular, policies and strategies were aimed at sustainable development and poverty eradication through multifaceted rural development action. In that context and in conformity with General Assembly resolution 60/138, improving the life of women in Ethiopia, especially those living in the rural areas, was one of the major responsibilities of the country's federal and regional authorities.

36. Government policies and strategies had been drawn up with a view to gender mainstreaming in the economic, social and political areas. The Ministry of Women's Affairs monitored the overall implementation of such policies. Women's affairs bureaux in all regional states carried out activities at the grass-roots level. In all sector ministries, women's affairs offices were responsible for ensuring gender equality and empowerment in their respective institutions and supporting related national efforts. A new criminal code providing for broader women's rights and protection had been enacted and was enforced. Legislation ensuring women's access to land, credit facilities and other economic resources had been promulgated. A health extension worker programme had been launched in a bid to reduce the number of maternal deaths nationwide. The Ethiopian Government took practical measures to reduce violence against women, particularly through the enactment of appropriate legislation and the implementation of effective enforcement mechanisms, and had integrated women's issues in a five-year development strategy aimed at eradicating poverty (PASDEP). The result had been increases in access to health services, girls' enrolment in primary school and the scope of HIV treatment and a significant decline in the maternal mortality rate.

37. Although still inadequate, the number of women holding Government and public administration posts had increased at all levels. Generally speaking, the challenges faced by women were due to insufficient human resources, lack of awareness of the impact of harmful traditional practices and inadequate capacity and resources to enforce the law and implement the strategies adopted. Accordingly, a coordinated approach by national and international actors was crucial to achieving women's empowerment and emancipation.

38. **Ms. Grabianowska** (Poland) said that, while it supported the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the European Union, her delegation wished to declare that any reference in that statement to the sexual and reproductive rights of women did not constitute an encouragement of the promotion of abortion as a means of achieving the advancement of women. Poland, fully committed to the advancement of women, looked forward to working with the Committee and other delegations to achieve that goal.

39. **Mr. Cherkaoui** (Morocco) said that Moroccan women had always played a leading role in the country's political, social and economic life. Currently, the Government included seven women, while there were 34 female members of Parliament. Women were also active in civil society and NGOs. A royal committee had been set up to ensure that all stakeholders would cooperate to implement a reform adopted by Parliament in 2004. That reform had established the principle of gender equality, men's and women's joint responsibility for the family, the possibility for a woman to get married without her

father's or custodian's permission, 18 as a standard minimum age for marriage and divorce through mutual consent. Moreover, the reform had provided for drastic restrictions on polygamy, such as a judge's prior authorization and a marriage contract clause in which the husband could commit to not taking another wife. Under the same rules, either husband or wife could sue for divorce, while common assets could be split between the divorcing spouses. In 2007, a reform of the Nationality Code had enabled Moroccan mothers married to foreigners to pass on their Moroccan nationality to their children.

40. Harmonization of Moroccan legislation with international instruments was a priority for Morocco. Legislation on prisons contained specific provisions guaranteeing women's integrity and rights. A Criminal Code reform had reinforced protection for women and children by prohibiting trafficking, prostitution and pornography involving children, sexual harassment and all forms of gender-based discrimination. There was further need for the implementation of comprehensive gender-related strategies, such as a national strategy for gender equality and gender mainstreaming adopted in 2006, the strategy for eliminating violence against women and the operational plan for its implementation. Structures set up to help women and girls who were victims of violence included a national hotline for specialized counselling services and legal, medical and psychological assistance; and a national observatory for combating violence against women. The Mohammed V Foundation played an active role in supporting activities for rural women and the girl child.

41. **Ms. Sulimani** (Sierra Leone) said that despite a number of constraints attributable to the weak overall economic and social development of the country and the impact of a civil war, Sierra Leone had been trying to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Sierra Leone had presented its combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report during the thirty-eighth session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, with the financial and technical support of development partners, especially from United Nations sources such as the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the country team in Sierra Leone.

42. Since ratifying the Convention in 1988, the Government had established the Women's Bureau to coordinate issues relating to women, and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, which served as the national machinery responsible for promoting the advancement and empowerment of women. Practical measures had also included the incorporation of the Convention into legislation, legal reform and the adoption of a twin policy on gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women, and steps had been taken to encourage the wider participation of women in decision-making processes. Gender parity in education had been eliminated through the adoption of affirmative action measures.

43. Sierra Leone's report had been commended for being informative and candid, and the efforts made by the Government, among others, in signing the Optional Protocol, revising discriminatory legal provisions and enacting new legislation on gender issues and human trafficking had been praised. Moreover, the Government had made strides in addressing the areas of concern raised by the Committee in its recommendations, and had moved swiftly to enact laws that ensured further protection of the rights of women, especially in rural areas. Issues such as violence against women, inheritance of property and forced marriages had also been addressed. Nonetheless, since Sierra Leone had recently held general elections, the Government hoped to embark on the adoption of more proactive measures under the current minister responsible for gender issues.

44. Sierra Leone was fully committed to the implementation of the Convention and other relevant human rights instruments. The new administration was committed to improving the delivery of health-care services to women and children and especially to the reduction of infant and maternal mortality. While the success of the Government depended first and foremost on its own efforts, the support of development partners was also crucial. In that regard, she appealed to the international community to support Sierra Leone in pursuing its obligations and commitment to the cause of the women of Sierra Leone.

45. **Ms. Gallardo Hernández** (El Salvador) said that in keeping with the belief that women were inherent to the national development process, the Government of El Salvador had accorded high priority to a strategy focusing on gender equity and the strengthening of the national machinery responsible for the coordination,

evaluation and supervision of the implementation of the national policy on women. That policy had been formulated in response to an appeal for Member States to provide systematic, full, multisectoral and sustained leadership in promoting the advancement of women in urban and rural areas. Her Government believed that reaching the Millennium Development Goals should not only be a quantitative achievement, but should also lay the foundation for social processes that provided a life of dignity and social harmony, based on the principle of gender equality in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

46. El Salvador had taken firm action to follow up the implementation of its obligations under the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Belem do Pará Convention, and the high level of political commitment to the advancement of women was evidenced by the fact that the First Lady of the Republic of El Salvador headed the main body responsible for the development of women. The Government had also doubled the budget allocated to promotion of the policy on women.

47. El Salvador sought to ensure that women were offered education of high quality and of a non-sexist nature, providing them with marketable skills and equal access to the labour market. Microcredit and microfinance initiatives and the encouragement of entrepreneurial capacity were therefore regarded as important tools for the empowerment of Salvadorian women. The establishment of production and training centres for women had greatly enhanced their socio-economic status.

48. Under the national policy on women and the 2005-2009 plan of action, various governmental and NGO stakeholders and local women's organizations had joined efforts in fostering equality and women's participation at all levels of society, and had taken relevant legislative steps to prevent and eradicate violence against women.

49. **Ms. Maierá** (Brazil) said that the advancement of women was an integral part of her Government's national policies and programmes in the areas of human rights, social inclusion and development. The establishment of a special secretariat had paved the way for a set of normative and institutional initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. The internationally agreed platforms for action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had provided indispensable guidance for Brazil's action at the national and regional levels.

50. Brazil was an emerging developing country with an unequal distribution of income, uneven development and radical contradictions. In the implementation of international instruments, the complexities and uniqueness of Brazilian society formed a conceptual foundation for the work of the Government. The first national plan of policies for women, adopted in 2004, had set the basic principles for the design and implementation of national programmes aimed at the advancement of women. Outlining recent achievements and priority areas, she said that the promotion of the human rights of women was closely connected to the development agenda and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Gender equality and empowerment were also essential elements in combating hunger and poverty and achieving sustainable development.

51. Principles were translated into concrete measures in different settings. In schools, for example, policies had been formulated to encourage non-discriminatory practices, respect for diversity, including sexual orientation, and in stimulating the interest of girls in non-traditional disciplines. In the workplace, national policies were aimed at eliminating discriminatory barriers to access, salaries, promotions and permanence in jobs. Access to sexual and reproductive health services remained a critical element, and the Government was especially concerned at the growing trend towards the feminization of sexually transmitted diseases, in particular, HIV/AIDS. The increasing vulnerability of women had called for a specific programme for improving access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

52. Brazil was also committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of rural and indigenous workers. The particular situation of women of African descent had attracted special attention as that group faced discrimination on the basis of both gender and ethnicity. Concerning violence against women, Brazil had participated actively in the operation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, a regional instrument that was considered a model for treaties on violence against women. The Convention had inspired a federal law to eliminate violence against women and

to impose stiffer penalties for such violence. The innovative aspects of the new legislation recognized the central role of civil society in preventing domestic violence and providing care for victims. It had also been the first federal law to include a reference to "sexual orientation".

53. The Government was strongly committed to combating trafficking in women and girls. A national plan for combating human trafficking had been devised to build capacity in the local public services, with the help of the education and social work sectors.

54. Brazil attached particular importance to the sharing of good practices and coordination among States, especially at the regional level. At the international level, Brazil appreciated the work of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in assisting developing countries to overcome structural and circumstantial difficulties in the area of the advancement of women. In that regard, she made specific reference to the work of UNIFEM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

55. **Ms. von Lillien** (International Fund for Agricultural Development) said that there was growing recognition among development practitioners of the need to maximize the impact of development programmes through gender mainstreaming. Significant progress had been made in integrating gender into agricultural research. However, the pivotal role of women in food production was still not adequately reflected in many national agricultural policies or agricultural development programmes and projects.

56. In order to promote gender mainstreaming, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), along with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank, was preparing a "Gender in Livelihoods (GAL) Sourcebook", to help practitioners integrate gender analysis and pro-poor approaches into sector-based programmes and projects. Rural livelihoods in specific rural subsectors, concepts such as assets, extension, markets, risks and vulnerability, were among the range of issues covered. In the course of preparing the Sourcebook, a number of gaps had been identified: although gender activities had been clustered around microfinance, little was known about the role of women in the larger rural finance sector. The concerns of women were rarely taken into account when it came to investment in infrastructure development and differentiation between women farmers' tasks and those of their male counterparts, and women were at a clear disadvantage in terms of access to extension services, new technologies, information and decision-making powers.

57. The report of the Secretary-General (A/62/202) had shown that little information was available on the extent to which women in rural areas could influence the design and implementation of development programmes and policies. One of the key concerns of IFAD was to give rural women a voice in decisions that affected their lives and future prospects. To that end, the Fund was engaged in strengthening rural women's organizations, training and education, and in providing access to market information and production support services. Capacity and institution-building in poor communities was crucial in helping the populations of those communities to claim their rights and counter the risks associated with extreme poverty.

58. IFAD had learned that activities designed to improve the economic status of women and their organizational and decision-making capacities were most successful when such action was complemented by investments in the water supply, health care and literacy, since those services gave women the time, energy and know-how necessary to participate actively in the economic, social and political spheres. In order to fully realize the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction, the development community should work within the agenda set by rural women themselves.

59. At the international level, further effort should be made to include rural women in important policy discussions. Through its grants programme, IFAD was supporting farmers' organizations, with equal representation of women and men, and had introduced a farmers' forum at its Governing Board. Specific attention should be paid to the role of rural women at the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in which focus was expected to be placed on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa.

60. **Mr. Buff** (International Committee of the Red Cross) said that greater effort was required to raise awareness on the plight of women affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence and to improve respect for international humanitarian law. Women must be protected against the dangers arising from the

conduct of hostilities, and should be able to live without fear of unlawful killing, ill-treatment, trafficking or abduction.

61. Although women were resilient, situations of violence exposed them to the same physical threats as the community as a whole, in addition to sexual violence, which was gender-specific. Rape and other forms of sexual violence in wartime were serious violations of fundamental rules protecting people in situations of violence and constituted war crimes when perpetrated against persons protected under international humanitarian law. The consequences of such crimes had lasting repercussions for women, beyond the physical trauma, and for societies, especially in instances where the integrity of communities and families was bound to the "virtue" of their women. Sexual violence was preventable. It was therefore incumbent on States and other actors to enforce the rules prohibiting such violence. In that regard, he was pleased to note recent developments at the national and international level to end impunity for perpetrators of violations against women. There must be continued efforts to prevent such violations and to provide adequate assistance to their victims.

62. Displacement also compounded the risk factors facing women during periods of armed conflict, particularly when they were responsible for the survival of their families. Appropriate assistance that took the needs of women heads of household into account could reduce the specific risks they faced when they tried to secure income, food and other scarce provisions during displacement. ICRC tried to ensure that its humanitarian programmes and activities took their specific needs and perspectives into account and enabled them to become self-sufficient.

63. In post-conflict situations, women with missing relatives experienced the psychological anguish of not knowing the fate of their loved ones and of not being able to complete the grieving process. Another aspect that was often overlooked was the lack of official acknowledgement of the status of missing persons. In the case of missing spouses, the women themselves had no clear legal status, which affected their rights to property, inheritance, guardianship and their prospects of remarriage and entitlement to benefits. ICRC provided material assistance and support throughout the administrative procedures involved in applying for financial support or legal advice. It also supported psychological workshops for families of missing persons and sensitized the authorities and other bodies on the need to support those families. No effort should be spared in preventing disappearances and elucidating the fate of the missing as quickly as possible, and States should acknowledge the situation of the wives of missing persons in their laws and provide them with the necessary assistance.

64. **Mr. Omar** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that in spite of the many positive international agreements, conferences and summits, there was still widespread and serious discrimination against women in the social, cultural, political and economic spheres. Problems such as violence, inequality in inheritance and property rights, the digital divide along gender lines, HIV/AIDS and climate change took a heavy toll on women, particularly rural women, and increased poverty and food insecurity. Implementation of a successful rural and agricultural policy required that development strategies should take social factors into account.

65. Seventy-five per cent of the world's poor lived in rural areas, and rural women represented half of that population. They depended on agriculture and related rural crafts, trade and services for their livelihoods. The role of women in agriculture, fisheries and forestry and their immeasurable contribution to household and national food security must be given urgent attention.

66. FAO focused on capacity-building and would continue to assist Member States in formulating appropriate national action and policies for the attainment of their goals, fulfilment of their commitments, and reducing gender disparities in access to, and control over, productive resources and services. FAO also helped States to adopt a gender perspective in confronting the problems related to property rights, rural poverty, food security, HIV/AIDS transmission and the development of adaptation practices in response to climate change.

67. Close collaboration among actors at all levels was crucial to creating an enabling social environment. FAO was fully committed to responding, within its mandate, to the challenges posed by social and economic factors, and was ready to establish partnerships for effectively promoting the advancement of rural women and gender equality as a means of combating hunger and poverty. He drew attention to the theme of the 2007 World Food Day, *Right to Food*, which sought to highlight the right to food and

continuous access to production resources and the right to an income for the purchase of adequate food.

68. **Ms. Dhjacta** (United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) said that UN-Habitat supported the report of the Secretary-General on the measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the Outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/62/178). Sustainable urbanization was one of the most pressing challenges facing the international community. Women and men experienced urban life differently. Inequalities in access to basic services such as water, sanitation and housing had resulted in extreme forms of urban poverty. Women did not have the same access as men to resources such as land, credit and technologies. Women and their children were vulnerable to urban crime and were particularly affected during evictions, disasters and conflicts. Women continued to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of employment. They were increasingly becoming victims of human trafficking and various forms of violence.

69. The "Safer Cities" programmes promoted deeper understanding of violence against women through monitoring of their safety and the exchange of best practices. UN-Habitat had initiated a good governance programme to promote dialogue between communities and local authorities. It provided support for improved shelter delivery systems and housing rights as well as security of tenure, particularly for women, through its Global Land Tool Network. It had also launched a programme to empower urban women entrepreneurs through housing development, the protection of land rights and job creation, among other areas. The programme had resulted in the establishment of women's land access trusts, which mobilized women to form housing cooperatives and to save in order to benefit from various mortgage finance mechanisms. The trusts served as brokers between poor women in communities, the Government bureaucracy and financial institutions and enabled women to own land and housing. The programme was part of the Slum Upgrading Facility.

70. **Mr. Ndjonkou** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that despite major advances in fighting discrimination at work, the ILO report on discrimination entitled Equality at Work: Tackling the Challenges showed that the persistence of gender gaps in employment and pay was still cause for concern. The ILO action plan against discrimination included promoting gender equality through more integrated and coordinated global action, mainstreaming non-discrimination and equality into decent work country programmes and promoting better laws and their enforcement, among other measures. ILO supported the establishment of tripartite commissions on equal opportunities at the workplace. It had adopted a resolution on the promotion of gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection and provided training on pay equity through various programmes. Another area of discrimination for women related to their reproductive roles, as they faced hiring inequities and dismissal on the basis of actual or even potential pregnancy. A recent ILO paper entitled *Safe Maternity and the World of Work* highlighted priority areas for action at the workplace which would contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 5. The ILO approach to violence against women migrant workers was based on a strategy of promoting gender-sensitive migration policies and labour standards for migrant workers within the framework of the Decent Work Agenda. ILO was currently implementing a number of projects addressing trafficking in migrant women and forced labour.

71. Rural workers faced the highest incidence of poverty and vulnerability as they were often unorganized and lacked union protection. ILO worked with other international organizations to promote equality between women and men and gender integration in the cooperative movement and society. Cooperatives were able to address the feminization of poverty by providing opportunities to women to improve their economic situation as members or as employees of cooperatives.

72. **Ms. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that the advancement of women was among the main areas of activity of IPU, as it was only by working collectively with parliaments that gender inequality and discrimination could be addressed. IPU put particular emphasis on enhancing the role of parliaments in the budgetary process and ensuring that the latter responded to the needs of both men and women. Parliamentary working groups and committees must be gender-balanced, economic statistics and other data gender must be disaggregated and women must be adequately represented within the civil service, especially the economic and finance departments.

73. Political processes would not be gender-sensitive unless there were more women in decision-making positions. IPU was continuing to support women in politics, including the organization of regional conferences for women parliamentarians and women in political decision-making positions. It would also continue to work with the Division for the Advancement of Women to organize a parliamentary day at the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

74. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in reference to the statement by the Observer for Palestine, said that Israel had full sympathy for the suffering of innocent Palestinian women. Brave leadership on the part of Palestinians in ending the terror was needed, however, if the suffering of women was to be alleviated. Palestinians must recognize that Israeli security was in their interest as well. It was Palestinians — not Israelis — who were killing their daughters and sisters in the name of family honour. Women and children had also been killed, during the violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas in the summer of 2007. According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, both sides had brought civilians into the conflict by preventing food from reaching them and firing at peaceful demonstrators. The houses of both parties to the conflict had been set on fire or targeted by projectiles in a policy of collective punishment to subdue the other side. Most of Gaza City had suffered from power outages and the interruption of basic services, threatening to bring about a humanitarian disaster. Gunmen had prevented ambulances from reaching the wounded or taking them to hospitals, which had increased the death toll. The situation described by the Centre confirmed that Palestinian women were victims first and foremost of their own society. In too many cases Palestinian women were forced by terrorist groups to carry out attacks, making them both victims and victimizers.

75. Her delegation was pleased to hear from the Observer for Palestine that the Palestinian people wanted peace. That statement was contradicted, however, by the more than 1,000 Qassam rockets fired by Palestinian terrorists from the Gaza Strip into Israel since June 2007. Nevertheless, in the light of recent regular meetings between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, there was renewed hope for dialogue and reconciliation. The long and challenging road to peace must be travelled by Israeli and Palestinian women together.

76. **Mr. Abdeen** (Sudan) said that the draft resolution on the use of rape as an instrument of State policy being sponsored by the United States of America was clearly designed to target particular States, and that it had already been rejected by the African Group because of its ulterior agenda. His country welcomed international assistance from any States Members of the United Nations, including the United States, for its efforts to protect and empower women. But the United States needed to take care not to inflate claims about the numbers of women who benefited from the women's centres in Darfur. The Government of the Sudan was implementing numerous programmes to protect women throughout the country and in Darfur, in addition to the programmes being run by volunteer organizations, which he hoped would receive support from the United States and other States Members.

77. **Mr. Shinyo** (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in reference to a statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said that it was unfortunate that this country's representative had touched on issues of the past which were not relevant to the item under discussion. His Government had acknowledged those issues on many occasions, including in the Pyongyang Declaration. Concerning the wartime comfort women, the Government had expressed its sincere apologies and remorse and acknowledged the involvement of the military authorities of the day.

78. The claim that 200,000 women from Korea and elsewhere in Asia had been forcibly drafted as comfort women, however, was entirely groundless. The issue of past history should be resolved through concrete consultations with a view to normalizing relations. Japan could not accept any attempt to divert attention from the ongoing problem of the abductions carried out the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or other serious human rights concerns by having the Committee take up an issue dealing with events which had occurred more than 60 years previously. It urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to implement the relevant human rights resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. It also drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/62/318), which referred to nine outstanding cases of enforced or involuntary disappearances and urged it to comply with General Assembly resolution 61/174 and to take steps to clarify those cases. It should resolve the abductions issue by allowing the surviving abductees to return to their

countries of origin. Based on the outcome of the working group on the normalization of relations between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the outcome document of the Six-Party Talks adopted in October 2007, Japan stood ready to consult with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on specific steps leading to normalization.

79. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Palestinian people were undergoing a painful period in their national history which they were seeking to overcome with the restoration of national unity and achievement of their inalienable rights. His Government had explicitly condemned any violent and unlawful actions in various forums. It was making every effort to address the consequences of those actions for women to the extent of its ability, which had been limited by the destruction of Palestinian institutions in recent years as a result of the occupying Power's policies and practices.

80. Nevertheless, those actions constituted an internal Palestinian issue, and raising the issue in the current forum was an attempt to evade the topic at hand. His delegation had not delved into Israel's internal situation, where discrimination was rife, particularly against the Arab population, but had focused on Israel's unlawful actions as an occupying Power. It must be recognized that the Palestinian internal situation had occurred in the larger context of the prevailing Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of Israel's systematic violations of human rights of the Palestinian people, many amounting to war crimes.

81. Israel's violations of the rights of Palestinian people for more than 60 years far surpassed any of the unacceptable acts committed by Palestinian individuals or groups. Those violations determined the very existence of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel had repeatedly used the pretext of terrorism to justify unjustifiable acts. It was in fact terrorism exercised by the occupation regime which caused the suffering of the Palestinian people and necessitated international assistance. Such terrorism, resulting in death, loss of family, detention, displacement and poverty, was what Palestinian women had experienced during Israeli military occupation. They had been denied their most basic rights, including the right to life, security, housing and many others. Women felt terror when Israeli bulldozers demolished their houses while they were inside. Children in refugee camps felt terror when bullets and missiles rained down on their homes and playgrounds. Terror was indeed a threat to peace and stability in the region. Therefore, the Committee must work tirelessly to eliminate the terror which Palestinian women felt in their hearts. As the occupying Power, Israel must allow the Palestinian people to enjoy a life of dignity and security in which all their inalienable rights were respected.

82. **Mr. Jang** Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) expressed disappointment at the two-faced attitude of the Japanese delegation when it claimed that it was irrelevant to discuss the issue of comfort women before the Committee and that the figure of 200,000 was groundless. His Government had been raising the issue for many years, yet Japan had done nothing to resolve it to date. His Government had done everything it could to resolve the issue of abductions, including providing relevant material and witnesses. Japan, however, had refused to accept its sincerity. Japan had mentioned nine outstanding cases of abduction, whereas 8.4 million people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had been affected by Japanese abductions, including 200,000 comfort women and 1 million who had perished. He hoped that Japan would address the problem with sincerity and in good faith.

83. **Mr. Shinyo** (Japan) said that it did not bear repeating that his delegation recognized the issue of comfort women as one that severely injured the honour and dignity of women, as it had repeatedly and sincerely expressed its remorse for what had occurred during the War. Relations must be normalized between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Past issues could be addressed sincerely once negotiations had begun. Japan would normalize relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through the settlement of the unfortunate past and a comprehensive resolution of outstanding problems, including abductions, nuclear issues and past grievances. With regard to the abductions, the issue had not been settled at all. Among the 17 recognized abductees, only 5 had returned to Japan. It required a clear explanation on the part of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of the remaining 12. The evidence provided by it was not adequate. Moreover, it was not just a national question, as citizens of other countries such as Thailand and Romania had been abducted as well.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/62/SR.13

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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe .... (Jamaica)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 63: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/38, A/62/177, A/62/202 and A/62/290)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/173, A/62/201 and A/62/188)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/62/178)

1. **Mr. Pak** Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in reference to the statement by the representative of Japan made at the previous meeting, said that Japan claimed that its sixty-year-old crimes should not be discussed in the United Nations. Those were crimes against humanity, however, on which no statute of limitations was imposed; for example, Nazi criminals from the Second World War were still being brought to trial. If the history of some 200,000 so-called comfort women from his country brought to Japan as sexual slaves during the War was not to be discussed, the world would be doomed to repeat such crimes.

2. The issue of abductions which Japan had raised was comparatively minor, and his Government had been generous in its response. It had formally expressed its regret and had been cooperating in allowing the abductees to return home and providing information on those already deceased. Several rounds of talks had taken place, but Japan was not sincere. His delegation called on Japan to take a constructive attitude to those talks if it really wanted to solve the problem.

3. **Mr. Tupouniua** (Tonga) said that 2007 was the halfway mark towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and Tonga was committed to their full implementation. The inclusion and advancement of women lay at the heart of the development of a civil society that was democratic, peaceful and productive.

4. Tonga had recently experienced civil unrest, and had begun a review of its political reform agenda, including the process of national reconciliation. Tongan women played a pivotal role in reconciliation by holding their families together and working to solve problems at the grass-roots and at the national level. With a 99 per cent literacy rate, they had equal access to education at all levels in order to acquire the skills necessary to participate in all sectors.

5. Tonga encouraged the participation of women in politics and had opened the way for women to hold leadership positions in the public sector, an important step in gender mainstreaming. In order to equip them to enter the business sector, training had been provided to help women set up business plans and open microenterprises.

6. In 2006 the Privy Council had proposed amendments to the land laws to allow women, in cases where there was no direct male heir, to inherit registered allotments of land, allowing daughters to inherit from their fathers in the absence of a male heir. If the proposal was accepted, it would enhance the economic status of Tongan women.

7. Tonga was determined to improve the health of mothers and the physical safety of girls. Although it had not yet signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it worked closely with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that women's issues took a central place in Government policies.

8. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) welcomed the progress made in setting standards for the promotion and protection of women's rights. Nepal attached great importance to the role of the United Nations for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

9. Nepal had made significant strides towards gender equality and empowerment. Women had equal property and citizenship rights, and were guaranteed at least one third of seats on elected bodies, including Parliament. The Interim Constitution of February 2007 guaranteed civil liberties and fundamental freedoms to all without distinction. The Interim Development Plan 2007-2010 gave high priority to poverty alleviation, girls' education, women's access to economic resources, political and social empowerment and elimination of gender discrimination.

10. As a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, among other international human rights instruments, Nepal had been submitting its periodic reports on implementation. He appealed for increased technical assistance, especially to the least developed countries, meeting reporting obligations under such instruments.

11. The Government had taken several legal, administrative and policy measures to end discrimination and violence against women, including severe penalties for sexual harassment, domestic violence and trafficking.

12. Finally, he expressed support for United Nations efforts towards gender equality. It should extend support to developing countries, especially the least developed, to enhance their national capacity for the development of women.

13. **Ms. Swengbe** (Liberia) said that the Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had made a great deal of progress in supporting countries to advance gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the world. UNIFEM support to the strengthening of ministries for women's affairs had become the engine of gender mainstreaming. Through such an initiative, Liberia had been able, in its new rape law, to align the Penal Code with the human rights standards set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The law had been adopted after advocacy by many rights organizations, which had established the basis for national dialogue and mobilization on the issue.

14. Liberia had always placed high priority on the advancement of women as a national policy. Perhaps the best testimony of that had been the 2005 election of Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President, the first democratically elected woman President in Africa and among the few women heads of State and Government in the world.

15. It would require the political will of national Governments, and the international community and the financial and material support of the Division and the specialized agencies to improve the status of women globally. She therefore expressed the hope that all Member States would remain committed to the cause of women's rights and equality in responding to the needs of humanity in general.

16. **Mr. Gankhuyag** (Mongolia) said that poverty and unequal access to economic resources continued to be among the main obstacles to the attainment of gender equality for rural women in Mongolia. His Government attached great importance to the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the national development strategy, especially in the area of rural development. The law on domestic violence adopted by Parliament in 2004 outlined concrete actions and regulations to protect victims of domestic violence, and a working group had been set up to design a national programme with the participation of relevant Government departments and non-governmental organizations. In recent years, partnership between Government and civil society organizations undertaking activities on gender equality had been strengthened.

17. With respect to political empowerment of rural women, more effective measures must be undertaken. Amendments to the Law on Political Parties and the Election Law had been introduced with the intention of increasing women's representation as candidates for elected office to a minimum of 30 per cent, which would give them a greater voice in making policy.

18. There was also an endeavour to promote employment through enhancing the skills of women living in rural areas, especially female heads of households, in order to alleviate poverty. Vocational training centres had been established to provide both formal and non-formal education. The Master Plan for Education 2006-2015 had established objectives for general improvements to the quality of education, which would reduce migration to urban areas and support regional development. The Government, in collaboration with the International Development Association of the World Bank, had developed the Sustainable Livelihoods project, which was intended to increase availability of microcredit services in selected parts of the country. Those policies and activities were aimed at improving the plight of rural women and empowering them to be both contributors to and beneficiaries of development efforts.

19. **Ms. Al Mansoori** (United Arab Emirates) said that her Government was committed to implementing the recommendations and outcomes of all regional and international conferences on the advancement of women, particularly the Beijing Declaration and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The United Arab Emirates had issued a number of laws to regulate the work of expatriate labourers in the country, with a special focus on women in order to protect their rights and dignity and guarantee them humane and suitable working conditions.

20. Her Government had taken a series of other steps in previous years to work for the advancement of

women, such as acceding to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and launching a political reform plan to expand women's role in the political process. Women held two seats in the cabinet and about a fourth of the seats in the Federal National Council, the United Arab Emirates' parliamentary body. That was considered one of the highest ratios of women's participation in parliaments, by international standards. Enrolment rates of girls in grade schools and higher education had risen, as had the percentage of women holding advanced degrees. Women occupied two thirds of public sector jobs, 30 per cent of which were leadership and decision-making positions. Her Government continued to work to eliminate social and psychological obstacles to the full integration of women in all professional fields.

21. **Mr. Arguello** (Argentina) stressed the importance of the empowerment of women and gender equality for sustainable development. He therefore welcomed the ratification by the National Congress of Argentina, 30 per cent of whose members were women, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. He also noted that, since the constitutional reform of 1994, the Convention itself had the same legal force in Argentina as the Constitution. The Convention and Constitution were complemented by a comprehensive normative framework, including the 2005 National Plan to Combat Discrimination, the Reproductive Health and Responsible Procreation Act, the recent Sex Education Act and proposed amendments to the Penal Code which would deal inter alia with sexual assault.

22. The only way to prevent, eliminate and punish violence against women was to put an end to impunity. His Government was combating the stereotypes about women's role that were often the underlying cause of violence against women through the work of the National Women's Council, the Secretariat for Human Rights, the Tripartite Commission on Equality of Opportunity of the Ministry of Labour, the Victim Assistance Department of the Office of the National Prosecutor for Administrative Investigations, the Programme against Violence of the Ministry of the Interior and the Office of the Women's Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

23. At the regional level his Government had hosted the third meeting of experts of the follow-up mechanism to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, in June 2007 in Buenos Aires. His Government supported the commitment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to a stronger and more visible role for the Organization in efforts to eliminate violence against women and the launch towards the end of 2007 of a global campaign on violence against women. That support was in keeping with his delegation's belief in the importance of women's role in promoting sustainable development, human rights and security.

24. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) underscored the importance of the advancement of women and said the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly continued to provide the best tools for gender equality and the empowerment of women. However, the achievement of gender equality required more than merely outlawing discriminatory laws and practices; a concerted effort must be made to address situations of inequality.

25. Accordingly, her Government had made the advancement of women a key priority. For example, the Constitution of Eritrea mandated that 30 per cent of seats in Parliament were reserved for women, and women had a constitutional right to be candidates for election at all levels of government. Eritrea's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper put special emphasis on women's needs, and targeted measures had been adopted to improve women's access to resources, opportunities and basic social services.

26. Her Government was improving infrastructure and promoting economic strategies that had a direct impact on the lives of women in such areas as improved communications, electrification of rural areas, access to clean drinking water, basic education and microcredit. The National Education Gender Policy and Strategy was aimed at eliminating gender disparities at the primary and secondary levels and achieving universal primary education by 2015, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals.

27. Steps had been taken to ensure women enjoyed full access to health care and the necessary information to prevent and control the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. More health-care professionals would be trained, and adequate resources would be provided to health-care centres. Vitamin supplements, iodine and mosquito nets would be

provided to women of reproductive age. Furthermore, the continuing awareness-raising efforts of the National Union of Ethiopian Women and her Government and the recent adoption of a law banning female genital mutilation should lead to the elimination of that practice.

28. **Mr. Dicko** (Mali) said that women played an important role in the economic, political and social development of Mali. Although the basic legal texts of the country guaranteed women equality, juridical, socio-economic and cultural barriers to effective equality for women remained. Accordingly, his Government had committed itself to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

29. The gender dimension had been integrated into all policies and programmes. Efforts were being made to increase girls' school attendance rates, and education centres for development had been established in rural areas to provide illiterate or dropout 12 to 15-year-olds with training in the areas of literacy, civics, prevention of HIV/AIDS and job skills. In order to empower women, a microcredit scheme had been implemented, and efforts were likewise under way to provide rural women with options for productive activities, for example development of irrigated land for market gardening or small-scale processing of agricultural products, so that they could increase their income and become financially independent.

30. His Government, 28 per cent of whose elected representatives were women, was committed to promoting women's rights. It had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the protocol thereto. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family had been established, Caesarean sections were provided free of charge, efforts were being made to eliminate female genital mutilation and regular reports were prepared on the status of women. His Government had hosted an African regional conference on literacy in Bamako, 10 sites had been designated for the building of women's and children's centres and a Ministry for Basic Education, Literacy and National Languages, headed by a woman, had been established.

31. In spite of encouraging results, however, Mali did not have sufficient resources adequately to promote the advancement of women. He therefore called on the international community and donors to make a greater effort to provide assistance to Mali so that poverty could be eliminated and future generations guaranteed a better life.

32. **Mr. Penjo** (Bhutan) recalled that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was among the first international conventions that his Government had ratified and said that it looked forward to close cooperation with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Progress made and remaining challenges had been identified in his delegation's latest periodic report to the Committee.

33. Bhutan had a comprehensive range of social, economic, political and social frameworks further to enhance the already relatively equal status of women, eliminate any remaining discrimination and strengthen the implementation of the Convention. In keeping with the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, a National Commission for Women and Children had been established in 2004 to monitor women's and children's rights and investigate abuses; it would soon become independent of the Government, which would strengthen its mandate and enhance its legitimacy and influence. The Commission was in the process of finalizing a National Gender Plan of Action.

34. His Government welcomed the growth in the number of NGOs and civil society groups devoted to women's issues and looked forward to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including universal primary education and the empowerment of women. The enrolment rate for primary education was 96 per cent and gender equality was virtually at par at the primary and secondary levels, although achieving equality at the tertiary level by 2015 would pose a challenge. Free health care was available, with particular attention given to women's health, especially reproductive health. Significant progress had been made in the areas of infant and maternal mortality rates, child nutrition and access to clean drinking water.

35. Bhutan's people-centred philosophy of Gross National Happiness emphasized the role of women in a happy and responsible society. Women's rights

occupied an important place in the democratization process: the draft Constitution guaranteed women's right to participate in society as equals and also provided protections against all forms of discrimination, exploitation, violence, harassment and intimidation in both the public and private spheres.

36. His Government cooperated with the efforts of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in promoting women's issues and had ratified the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and the SAARC Code for the Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition. A gender database was being prepared by SAARC to generate data on violence against women, especially with regard to trafficking, the feminization of poverty and health, including HIV/AIDS.

37. **Ms. Bowen** (Jamaica) said that her Government's approach to the advancement of women was multisectoral and based on the work of its Bureau of Women's Affairs, the research undertaken at the University of the West Indies and the efforts of NGOs. At the regional level, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) secretariat ensured coordination and promoted training in women's issues. The United Nations likewise provided crucial technical assistance.

38. Much progress had been made towards the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Jamaica's national Gender Development Index indicated that women's life expectancy, income, school enrolment rate and participation in politics had improved. Those successes could be attributed to a consistent strategy of gender mainstreaming, which had increased the number of women in positions of influence.

39. Challenges nevertheless remained, including pervasive violence against women and poverty attributable partially to the number of women heads of households and an unemployment rate for women double that of men. Her Government was also closely monitoring the situation of human trafficking, in particular in women and girls, in order to ensure that it did not become a problem in Jamaica. The current year was the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, and it was therefore fitting that her Government had recently enacted the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment) Act. Other legislation had also been adopted or was being considered to address the problem of discrimination against women.

40. The advancement of women required international cooperation in such areas as the sharing of best practices and the implementation of agreed strategies. The United Nations played a key role in standard setting and encouraging consultation and adoption of strategies as well as in providing technical assistance. The Organization had established an impressive number of entities dealing with the advancement of women. She welcomed its efforts to deliver services at various levels, particularly the country level, and noted the special role played by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in particular with regard to technical assistance. In that regard, she welcomed the recommendation of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence concerning the creation of a stronger, unified gender entity with a view to raising the profile of women's issues and looked forward to the intergovernmental response to that recommendation. She stressed, however, that the integrity of the responsibilities and mandates of the United Nations for the delivery of services at the country level should not be compromised by any new arrangement. Her delegation would participate in discussions of the recommendation with a view to ensuring that Member States' concerns were debated fully.

41. **Ms. Cavalieri** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, despite her Government's reaffirmation of women's central role in society, an unfortunate gap remained with regard to gender equality and recognition of women's contribution to society. Women remained invisible in many countries, victims of the oppression imposed by an unjust model of development. That was why the new model of development that her Government strove to institute aimed to guarantee women's human rights and gender equality, thus freeing women from their historical domination and exploitation.

42. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had incorporated the notion of equality between men and women into its Constitution in 1999, when it had been approved by popular vote. In keeping with its vision of gender equality, the Government was executing a

policy of eradicating discrimination and violence against women. Some of the most important actions taken in support of that policy were: the establishment of shelters for women who were victims of domestic violence; a social programme that paid the national minimum wage to women living in extreme poverty while training them for work; and the granting of microcredit to women under the auspices of the Women's Development Bank.

43. Women's participation in public life was without precedent in Venezuela. Three of the five branches of government — the legislative, electoral and judicial branches — were headed by women.

44. Her Government reaffirmed the importance of fulfilling the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and it supported all international initiatives to take actions called for in the Platform of Action and in the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Venezuela also recognized the invaluable contributions of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Committee had conducted a workshop to assist Venezuela in preparing its next periodic report.

45. **Ms. Kulzhanova** (Kazakhstan) said that the world's women still had unequal access to resources and opportunities and were victims of abuse, poverty and discrimination. The participation of women was a prerequisite for development and access, particularly of rural women, to training, and microcredit must be increased. Member States should take steps to bridge income gaps between the sexes based on comparisons of wages in female- and male-dominated occupations. It was vital also to integrate women into economic decision-making and implement work-life policies that included childcare, parental leave and flexible working schemes for both men and women. Stronger emphasis should also be placed on the participation of men in the advancement of women and the elimination of discrimination.

46. Her Government had demonstrated a commitment to women's issues throughout the country's transition period, both de jure and de facto. The National Commission for Women and Gender Equality was taking the lead in implementing the national strategy on gender equality for 2006-2016, which had been elaborated in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in cooperation with the United Nations country team and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The strategy's 2006-2008 implementation plan covered the political and economic advancement of women, reproductive health, violence against women and children and gender equality in family relations. The "Otbasy" ("Family") parliamentary group had introduced a bill on equal rights and opportunities which envisaged the mandatory gender-sensitive evaluation of new and existing laws, regulations and national programmes as well as the use of gender budgeting. Women's representation in the lower chamber of parliament had increased from 11 per cent to 15.8 per cent as a result of the August elections in Kazakhstan.

47. A bill on domestic violence envisaged a standard set of methods and practices for law-enforcement bodies and community organizations as well as the development of a legal mechanism to prevent domestic violence. Various legislative amendments to existing laws were also under consideration with a view to strengthening liability for harassment and violence against women. Twenty-six crisis centres for victims of domestic violence had also been established throughout the country.

48. The High-Level Regional Consultation on Gender Equality and Development Planning and Budgeting in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), held in Almaty in May and organized jointly with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), was but one example of the country's effective cooperation with the Fund. The Consultation had been attended by more than 100 high-level decision makers representing Governments and civil society from 10 CIS countries, as well as bilateral and multilateral development partners. The ensuing Almaty Declaration would constitute the Commonwealth's contribution to the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to be held in Accra, Ghana, in September 2008.

49. Despite progress achieved, Kazakhstan continued to face serious challenges to the advancement of women, such as discrimination in the labour market, lack of awareness of gender issues among boys and men, negative gender stereotyping and obstacles to the enjoyment of women's reproductive health rights. Convinced that the whole of society benefited from

women's development, her delegation would continue to work to that end in close cooperation with the United Nations system and relevant NGOs.

50. **Ms. Morgan-Moss** (Panama) said that progress had been achieved in her country with regard to the advancement of women through various institutional mechanisms, such as the establishment of a National Council for Women in 1995. Law No. 22, enacted in 1997, required at least 30 per cent of a political party's candidates, as well as those seeking posts within the party, to be women. Though the situation had improved, the quota established by law had not been reached.

51. Other significant legal advances with regard to women included the Women and Development Pact, which established a number of commitments to gender equality. The Pact also provided for equal opportunities regardless of race, colour or social background. Other public policies focused on gender issues and legal equity had also been instituted. Panama had adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2001, and it had also adopted the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

52. **Ms. Kavun** (Ukraine) said that gender equality, sustainable development and peace were fundamental, interlinked objectives for the twenty-first century.

53. In line with the European Union, Ukraine considered gender equality and the empowerment of women to be a high priority at both the normative and policy levels, as well as an essential part of the development agenda. Her delegation thus fully supported the new gender architecture that had been proposed. Thanks to the efforts of the Commission on the Status of Women, a gender perspective had increasingly been integrated by the United Nations system and other multilateral mechanisms; however, much remained to be done. The priority theme for the Commission's fifty-first session, namely "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" had been warmly welcomed by Ukraine.

54. The national legislative basis for the promotion of gender equality had been further expanded in recent years. Ukraine's Constitution guaranteed equal rights and opportunities in all spheres as well as protection for pregnant women and mothers, while a Law on Ensuring the Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men had entered into force on 1 January 2006. The country now had a legislative definition of sex-based discrimination for the first time in its history. A national gender equality programme (2006-2010) and reproductive health strategy (2006-2015) had also been adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers.

55. Ukraine had hosted an international summit for women in October 2007 in Kiev to commemorate the tenth anniversary of a landmark gathering of women leaders from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that had been held in Vienna, Austria. The 2007 summit had received high-level support within Government, including from the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

56. Sexual exploitation and trafficking remained one of the worst forms of violence against women, which was particularly rampant in situations of armed conflict. Governments should strengthen existing legislation in line with relevant General Assembly resolutions in order to strengthen the protection of the rights of women and girls and provide for the punishment of offenders. When a woman was raped, beaten or mutilated, it was not a cultural but a criminal problem, and no Government could deny its responsibility to suppress such crimes.

57. **Ms. Anbar** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that her Government reaffirmed its commitment to its strategic goals on the advancement of women and gender equality, in accordance with the Beijing Platform of Action and the outcomes of other relevant international conferences. Violence against women contradicted the most fundamental human rights, and combating such violence was a prerequisite to achieving gender equality and the advancement of women.

58. Her delegation emphasized the importance of women's access to education, training and health care, and it expressed its concern regarding the situation of Palestinian and Arab women living under Israeli occupation. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya called on the United Nations to take measures to put an end to occupation, in order to allow the Palestinian nation and women to live in dignity, peace and security, in implementation of recommendations adopted by

international conferences on the advancement of women. Her delegation also expressed concern at the precarious situation of African women due to poverty, disease and armed conflict.

59. Her Government strongly condemned the growing phenomenon of trafficking in women, and placed emphasis on the protocol regarding the punishment of those involved in human trafficking, especially trafficking in women and children.

60. Libyan women had made significant achievements thanks to the free education available to all Libyan nationals. Women were holding senior diplomatic, judicial and military positions, a breakthrough in positions traditionally occupied by men. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had been one of the first States to accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was committed to integrating the Convention's provisions into national laws.

61. **Mr. Belinga-Eboutou** (Cameroon) said that discrimination, inequality, gender violence, abuse and poverty were women's daily lot. The intensity of the tragedy facing women varied between continents and countries, and such variation must be taken into account if real progress was to be achieved. The creation of stable and harmonious societies required concerted poverty-eradication efforts. It was not possible to talk of women's emancipation when women died giving birth because of the lack of hospitals or when they lacked access to markets for their produce owing to a lack of roads. Women could not participate in development unless they had access to appropriate credit, which was vital to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. Women's lack of education must also be addressed worldwide.

62. Cameroon, for its part, had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2005 and was in the process of finalizing a bill to prevent and suppress violence against women and eradicate female genital mutilation. In 2004, it had become party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

63. In 1999, the Government had adopted a political declaration and cross-cutting strategy to promote the participation of women in national development, with a focus on reducing gender inequality, strengthening women's access to financial resources and decision-making and remedying structural discrimination. Programmes to support rural women and retain girls in education had also been devised. The establishment of basic health infrastructure had been accelerated, with efforts to integrate reproductive health in primary services. A women's HIV/AIDS plan had also been adopted.

64. The protection of women was a national priority, it being vital that both sexes participated in the country's development. Real progress in realizing women's human rights, however, depended on strong international cooperation in support of comprehensive national policies. He could only stress that investing in women's advancement was to the advantage of the whole of society.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe .... (Jamaica)

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(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 66: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/62/297 and 319; A/C.3/62/2)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/62/182, 209 and 228)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (A/62/259)

1. **Ms. Veneman** (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) said that since the publication of the study on the impact of armed conflict on children prepared by the expert appointed by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/157 (A/51/306 and Add.1), the world had made some strides in bringing children back from the battlefield and in responding to their needs in situations of conflict. However, much more needed to be done. The 10-year strategic review of that study (A/62/228, part two) showed that despite successes the impact of conflict on children remained as brutal as ever. Children were not only caught in the crossfire; they were also often the intended targets of violence, abuse and exploitation. Over the past decade, children had been victims of strikes against schools and hospitals and had been killed or maimed by landmines and other explosive devices even after fighting had stopped. In conflict zones, their vulnerability was often greatly increased because violence claimed their first line of defence — their parents. Malnutrition, disease, displacement, lack of education and poverty also threatened children's survival and development. Acute malnutrition was a primary cause of child mortality in complex emergencies. As stated in the review, it was imperative that children, especially those caught in conflict, were protected from harm and ensured access to health care, education, clean water and sanitation and social services.

2. The review had benefited from input from United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, Governments and children, including those affected by conflict. In fact, more than 1,700 children and young people from 92 countries had participated through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Voices of Youth website and focus group discussions. She welcomed the presence of two youth representatives at the current meeting. Children's resilience, capacities and ability to contribute to peacemaking and peacebuilding should not be underestimated. She had met with many children victimized by war, including young women who had been abducted by the rebels at the age of 10. Currently in their late teens or early 20s, most of those young women had had children as a result of being forced to live with rebel soldiers. They had spoken of the difficulties in trying to re-establish a life where they could support themselves and their children. Despite the atrocities which one boy had witnessed, he retained the hope of returning to school and helping to save the lives of others. Such children had been a crucial part of the progress made over the previous decade to highlight the plight of children used by armed forces or groups.

3. The Paris Commitments and Paris Principles signalled the political will to help put an end to the use of children in armed conflict. UNICEF remained committed to contributing to the follow-up of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against children in coordination with its many partners. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had galvanized partners, stakeholders and children themselves to take action around a common cause.

4. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/62/228), said progress had been made over the previous 10 years in improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict, including strengthening of international norms and standards, systematic engagement by the Security Council and increased global awareness of the most effective strategies and programmes for those children. To date, 118 States had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The recent commitment by a number of Governments to the Paris Principles was another encouraging development.

5. Her country visits to observe at first hand the situation on the ground constituted a central element of her advocacy strategy for increased international cooperation and action. In 2007 she had visited the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Lebanon, Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories, Myanmar and, most recently, Cote d'Ivoire. During the course of the visits, parties to conflict had made numerous commitments, some of which were described in detail in the report. Some progress in implementing those commitments had been made. Since 2006, for instance, progress on action plans to end the recruitment of children by armed forces and

groups had been made in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Myanmar, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Chad.

6. The 10-year strategic review presented a sobering analysis of the changing nature of conflict and increased threats to children. While major armed conflicts had decreased in the previous decade, the number of intra-State and lower-intensity conflicts had actually risen. The international community must recognize the changing nature of conflict. War economies which commercialized and prolonged conflict must be better understood and effective action taken to stop the abuse and exploitation of children. There were grey zones of conflict blurring traditional lines between armed conflict and criminal violence, often involving transnational crime, non-traditional warfare and trafficking.

7. To end impunity the international community must translate the previous decade of advances in political engagement, legal instruments and standards into expanded action at the field level. Justice mechanisms must take into account the special needs and rights of children. The review also recommended greater investment in national capacities to ensure that international standards, norms and guidelines on juvenile justice were upheld. Children had become involved in many justice and reconciliation processes as witnesses and victims and needed special, child-friendly procedures to ensure their protection. Reintegrating children and rebuilding families was an essential part of the future. Interventions in health and nutrition needed more consistent support. The review further recommended that programming should include youth-oriented education and livelihood strategies, with particular attention to girls. Schools must be designated as zones of peace, and there must be efforts made to ensure awareness and training on the rights of children at the local level. Children should not be dealt with as lone individuals but as a vital part of families and communities. Youth participation must be an important part of any programme.

8. *A film entitled "Children and Conflict in a Changing World" was projected, featuring the voices of children affected by armed conflict and of child protection actors.*

9. **The Chairman**, introducing Ishmael Beah, said that Mr. Beah had been born in Sierra Leone in 1980 and that his parents and two of his brothers had been killed in the civil war when he had been barely 11. At age 13 he had been recruited as a child soldier. After two years of soldiering he had been placed in a rehabilitation home in Freetown thanks to UNICEF and had later gone on to complete his high school and college education in New York. He was the author of "A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier" and an outspoken advocate of children affected by war throughout the world.

10. **Mr. Beah** said that he had spoken 10 years previously at the present forum because he had felt the need to share his stories and mobilize the international community to put an end to the ongoing conflicts which continued to affect children. The message of the study on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306 and Add.1) was clear: more must be done for children immediately. He noted with disappointment that the problems raised 10 years previously in the study had not been addressed as urgently as he had hoped. Many strides had been made, including improved international legal standards and the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. However, more needed to be done.

11. He hoped that there would be no need for him to return to the forum in another 10 years to discuss what had not been accomplished. There was an urgent need to include children in the process of conflict and post-conflict resolution. Their voices should be heard. The experience and ideas of children who had been affected by conflict could give fresh impetus to efforts to address conflict and post-conflict situations. Prevention was an essential part of those efforts. States must muster the necessary political will to prevent conflicts before they got out of hand. There was also a need for cultural understanding, so that efforts could benefit fully from the resources already on the ground. He urged Member States to convey to others the message that children continued to suffer and to need their help in alleviating that suffering.

12. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to put questions to the Executive Director of UNICEF, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and Mr. Ishmael Beah.

13. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that children were a light that illuminated the way forward for the world; such a light must not be extinguished. In view of the

moving testimony by Mr. Beah, he asked what practical steps the international community should take to protect children in armed conflict.

14. **Ms. Lund** (Norway) commended the report of the Special Representative and particularly the emphasis on post-conflict peacebuilding. She asked how the Special Representative thought that participation by children in decision-making could be further developed.

15. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) noted that six main categories of crimes against children had been identified. In view of the fact that, since the start of the second intifada, nearly 1,000 Palestinian children had been killed and thousands of others maimed, she asked whether the Special Representative, who had visited the occupied Palestinian territories earlier in the year, would care to comment on the following points: the indiscriminate use of force that led to the deaths and maiming of children; the use of children as human shields; the effect on children of impeding access to humanitarian access and services, particularly in Gaza; and the impact of abject poverty arising from armed conflict on the children of the occupied territories.

16. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) commended the work of UNICEF and the Special Representative. Her Government would act on the latter's recommendations, which were based on a thorough understanding of the situation on the ground. She called on the international community to assist Côte d'Ivoire in meeting its commitments.

17. **Mr. Zheglov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had consistently advocated the involvement of the international community in the protection of children in armed conflict. There must, however, be an even-handed approach to all categories of serious crimes against children; it would be wrong to focus on some at the expense of others. In armed conflict, priority should be given to situations in which children suffered the most. He asked how the Special Representative intended to press for that approach.

18. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that the world had witnessed the brutality of the Israeli army's activities in Lebanon in 2006. Children — of whom 1,200 had been killed and over 2,000 injured — had comprised one third of the total civilian casualties. Nor was the suffering of Lebanese children at an end: 1.2 million cluster bombs, the most cruel of weapons, remained in place. Noting that the international community was apt to condemn atrocities after the event but seemed unable to prevent them at the time, he asked what action could be taken, for the sake of all children in armed conflict, to provide adequate protection.

19. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile), after welcoming the progress noted in the Special Representative's report with regard to girls in situations of armed conflict, asked which of the Cape Town Principles the Special Representative considered that Governments should give priority to implementing.

20. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed regret that the Special Representative's report had not contained more details on the situation of children in Palestine and Lebanon. Similarly, paragraphs 58 to 71 of the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/62/259) should have contained a reference to the aggression suffered by children in occupied territories. On the question of appointing a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, she said that such a mandate should not cover children in armed conflict. In that connection, she asked whether the Special Representative's current mandate specifically covered children in occupied territories. She had in mind children in the occupied Syrian Golan, for example.

21. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel) said that her delegation took note of the Special Representative's recognition of Hizbullah's cynical exploitation of children in armed conflict and the adverse effects of Palestinian factional fighting on children. Her delegation also welcomed the Special Representative's account of her visit to Sderot, where the children lived under unceasing strain owing to the indiscriminate firing of rockets on schools and kindergartens by terrorists in the Gaza Strip. Her delegation looked forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with the Special Representative. She also wished to know what progress there had been on the discussions with President Abbas and the Palestinian authorities, at which the President had agreed to revive a code of conduct under which Palestinian groups would not involve children in political or armed violence.

22. **Mr. Forshaw** (Australia) said that all aspects of the effects of armed conflict on children should be treated as a matter of priority. It would be helpful if all States became party to the Convention on the Rights of

the Child and its Optional Protocols. States should also ensure that international standards should be translated into tangible gains for children on the basis of appropriate national legislation. They could, moreover, provide financial support for UNICEF, which worked with children affected by armed conflict around the world. In Sri Lanka, for example, it provided community-based child protection; in East Timor, a child-protection officer worked with internally displaced persons; and, in Mindanao in the Philippines, UNICEF was working to ensure that children in conflict-affected areas had access to immunization and protection against abuse and exploitation. Lastly, States should put an end to impunity for crimes against children.

23. **Ms. Park** Enna (Republic of Korea) requested further details of the Special Representative's findings with regard to the use of violence — especially rape — against women and, in particular, girls in armed conflict.

24. **Mr. Akindele** (Nigeria) asked whether, in view of the many conflicts besetting the world, the Special Representative might be able to devote extra attention to the promotion of people like Ishmael Beah in order to deepen understanding of the phenomenon of child soldiers worldwide.

25. **Ms. Sulimani** (Sierra Leone), after paying a tribute to her compatriot Ishmael Beah, asked whether the Special Representative could give special consideration to the use of children as human shields in conflicts, a tactic adopted by warring parties in her country.

26. **Mr. Beah**, speaking in his capacity as an advocate for children in armed conflict, said, in response to the questions posed by the representatives of Gabon, Lebanon and Norway, that he welcomed the broader definition of the term "child soldier" that had been established. The definition should, however, be broadened still further to include all children affected by war and deprived of their right to be educated or live a normal life. Improving the lot of children in such situations was a global rather than a local issue, since the children of one generation were the leaders of the next; and their fate would have an impact on the rest of the world. The international community should therefore make every effort to find ways not only of supporting children currently affected by armed conflict but also of preventing such situations arising.

27. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said, with regard to the question by the observer for Palestine, that the situation had been complicated by the changing nature of the conflict, in which armed groups sometimes engaged in criminal activities. With the blurring of the line between combatants and civilians, the whole issue of terrorism and counter-terrorism would need to be adjusted in the light of international humanitarian law. With regard to the question by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, she said that a detailed report on the situation in the occupied territories was available on the website of her Office as an unofficial document submitted to the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It would, in due course, appear in the official report to the Working Group. As for the question by the representative of Israel, she said that discussions with the Palestinian Authority and Israel continued. She commended the cooperation shown by all the parties during her visit to the occupied territories and hoped that further progress could be made.

28. With regard to the points raised by the representatives of Norway and Nigeria, she said there had been much discussion on what action could be taken to promote greater participation by young people in the General Assembly and in civil society. As for the questions by the representatives of the Russian Federation and Australia, she concurred with the view that all serious violations of children's rights should be given equal treatment. She hoped that the report of her Office to the Security Council Working Group in February 2008 would provide an opportunity for all States to rectify situations within their territories that gave rise to concern. The same applied to the question raised by the representative of the Republic of Korea concerning the use of sexual violence in armed conflict. She was particularly concerned about the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where there had been an acceleration of child abuse and sexual violence. Countries with particularly egregious records would be listed in an annex, the so-called "naming and shaming list". Lastly, in response to the point raised by the representative of Gabon, she said that she endeavoured to be an independent voice and advocate for children. If, however, she was to implement the mandate given her by Member States themselves, States must show more political will to support the implementation of that mandate.

29. **Ms. Veneman** (UNICEF), replying to the representative of Syria, said that a document detailing facts on the situation of children would be prepared for the December 2007 meeting on the five-year review of developments since the General Assembly special session on children. UNICEF's activities for children in areas of conflict focused on health care, including immunization; and on education, which not only contributed to the children's future well-being, but also gave them a sense of stability. UNICEF increasingly sought feedback from children in order to evaluate its activities. Reintegration programmes were critical and required appropriate mentors and a duration long enough to enable the children concerned to make the shift from what they had been through to a situation matching their needs. It was essential to work with the communities because they were often reluctant to welcome back children who had been part of belligerent forces. Lastly, the plight of boys and young men drafted as child soldiers should not divert attention from what girls and young women suffered in times of conflict. The rapes were acts of incredible violence.

30. **Yanghee Lee** (Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that working in two chambers had made it possible to reduce the time lapse between the submission of a State party's report and its consideration by her Committee from two years to approximately one year. Consideration of 38 reports was currently pending, and the Committee expected to receive many more during the next year in view of tens of overdue reports under both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Accordingly, her Committee was considering temporary measures that would help to reduce the backlog.

31. The Committee had adopted new reporting guidelines for the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in October 2006 (CRC/C/OPSC/2) and for the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in October 2007 (CRC/C/OPAC/2). She urged States parties to abide by the new guidelines, which provided for additional information on measures for implementing legislative amendments and for identifying, recovering and reintegrating victims. Of the 10 General Comments formulated by her Committee, 5 had been adopted in the last two years. They related to the rights of children in juvenile justice, the rights of children with disabilities, a child's right to protection from corporal punishment, child rights in early childhood and the treatment of unaccompanied children outside their country of origin. In order to proceed with the formal adoption of the guidelines for children without parental care by the General Assembly, her Committee called on States parties to discuss the guidelines among themselves. The guidelines in question had been prepared under the leadership of the Government of Brazil and the Group of Friendly States.

32. The Committee's follow-up activities to its concluding observations had included several subregional workshops, one of which had been organized in Costa Rica in October 2006. Participants had included Government representatives, parliamentarians, representatives of United Nations agencies, national human rights institutions and NGOs and media professionals from Central American countries, Mexico and Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries. A similar event had been scheduled to take place in Burkina Faso for the French-speaking countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Such workshops assessed the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, identified issues requiring attention and provided an opportunity to exchange good practices and propose implementation measures.

33. Referring to the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299), she said that adequate institutional capacity to follow up the report's recommendations was essential. Member States should recommend the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children.

34. Referring to the Machel study 10-year strategic review she said that the Committee remained committed to undertaking efforts within its mandate to protect children involved in armed conflict, notably through the review of reports by States parties under the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and under the Convention. She further pointed out that several States appearing on the agenda of the Security Council and also in the Secretary-General's 2007 report on children and armed conflict were parties to the Optional Protocol and that their reports were pending.

35. With regard to treaty body reform, the Committee fully supported the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to improve current practices with a view to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness and looked forward to participating in the annual Inter-Committee Meetings of the treaty bodies on a more regular basis.

36. The Committee expected that the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), to be conducted by the Human Rights Council as of 2008, would inter alia serve as a complementary follow-up mechanism for assessing the implementation of its own concluding observations.

37. **Mr. Mbaidjol** (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), referring to the report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/62/182), called on Member States to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocols. OHCHR would continue to support the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its work. Referring to the Secretary-General's report on the girl child (A/62/297), he underscored that achieving the development goals for children, particularly girls, was contingent on, inter alia, women's empowerment and that a study by the World Health Organization (WHO) had confirmed that large numbers of girl children were subjected to domestic sexual abuse. Discrimination and violence against the girl child remained a global phenomenon despite progress achieved in that area. Treaty bodies monitored issues with a direct impact on the well-being of the girl child. Those issues included honour crimes, child marriages, early pregnancies, female genital mutilation, violence — including sexual abuse — in families and schools, vulnerability of girls with disabilities and trafficking in girls. With regard to special procedures, mention should be made of the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women; the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights aspects of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Lastly, the United Nations took steps to prevent and treat fistula with specific focus on the implementation of the Global Campaign to End Fistula, launched by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and its partners in 2003.

38. **Ms. Albuquerque** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that the world had made significant progress in ensuring the enjoyment of children's rights and that it was necessary to reinforce synergies with a view to protecting those rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been a source of inspiration at the national, regional and international levels. Its provisions had guided the formulation of national legislation in the areas of family law, child health and education, juvenile justice and the protection of children against violence, labour, sexual exploitation and armed conflict. Many countries had enacted comprehensive child rights codes or laws on various aspects of a child's life. The number of independent national institutions for children's rights — such as offices of ombudsmen and commissioners for children — had increased rapidly. A European Network of Ombudspeople for Children (ENOC) had been established in 1997. The Convention was increasingly taken into account by national and international courts. The European Court of Human Rights used it as a key reference complementing the European Convention on Human Rights, and it had made an impact on numerous international legal instruments. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union explicitly recognized children's rights and reaffirmed the obligation to act in the best interest of children and to take their views into account. The European Union had adopted guidelines on children and armed conflict and was in the process of drawing up European guidelines on the rights of the child.

39. However, despite those achievements, children still faced injustice, violence, exploitation, poverty and insecurity. Many children, particularly girls, children in rural areas and children belonging to minorities, were victims of discrimination and exclusion. Children's and young people's participation in decisions that affected their lives was rarely built into local practices and national systems. Efforts in the last 18 years had placed children's rights on the map. Future action should focus on mainstreaming those rights into national and international agendas and policies.

40. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that children had increasingly become victims of violence, including domestic violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking and disappearance. The situation had been compounded by a lack of awareness

of children's rights and of gender and health issues. The Southern African Development Community member States abhorred violence against women and children and had enacted new laws and amended existing legislation to prohibit such violence and to provide maximum penalties for perpetrators. The legislative process had been undertaken in conjunction with action in the social and cultural fields to protect the rights of children and to work for change in traditional practices and attitudes which undermined the children's enjoyment of their rights.

41. SADC member States had integrated international undertakings into their national development programmes and poverty reduction strategies and were striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, convinced that an investment in children was consistent with the achievement of their development targets, member States had also committed themselves to a framework for moving towards the goals set out in the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly entitled "A world fit for children".

42. Apart from efforts undertaken under the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, the countries of the region had invested substantial resources in improving the accessibility of boys and girls to quality education through a partnership between Governments, parents and communities. Substantial progress had been made in the provision of primary education, net enrolment rates of which ranged between 71 and 95 per cent, with no gender gap at that level.

43. Nevertheless, equal access to opportunities for girls and boys remained a challenge in many member States. National plans of action needed better funding in order for proper implementation of programmes that gave special consideration to the situation of the girl child and to reducing her vulnerability to poverty, hunger, insecurity, sexual exploitation, abuse and exposure to HIV/AIDS.

44. The spread of HIV/AIDS and the level of malaria-related deaths among young children were issues of major concern. Health challenges had been addressed through the formulation of regional health policies and strategies aimed at achieving acceptable standards of health, notably through the 1999 SADC Protocol on Health. Programmes to implement national and regional policies and strategies focusing on prevention and care for persons infected with the HIV/AIDS virus required additional resources in order to make a greater impact and to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic.

45. Several international conventions and policy guidelines, including the SADC Maseru declaration on HIV/AIDS, had been elaborated to protect and ensure the fulfilment of the rights of orphans and vulnerable children, and most SADC member States had adopted national policy instruments to support disadvantaged children. However, the level of resources at their disposal was far from adequate. He stressed that policies and commitments were meaningless without sufficient budgetary allocations to ensure that the rights promoted,in the various instruments were indeed enjoyed.

46. He urged the partners of SADC member States to continue their support in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The implementation of all internationally agreed commitments, including pledges to provide sufficient resources to support global efforts with respect to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases, would make a difference. The issue of intellectual property rights was crucial to the production of generic drugs. If developing countries were allowed to produce cheap drugs more patients would be able to receive medicines on a sustainable basis.

47. SADC endorsed the recommendation on the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children. Such a mechanism would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system in protecting the rights of children and in harnessing resources for the improvement of the conditions of children worldwide. In conclusion, he said SADC would table a biennial draft resolution on the girl child, which he hoped would be adopted by consensus.

48. **Mr. Degia** (Barbados) speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM was deeply concerned about situations of violence against children worldwide and strongly condemned all such forms of violence. Several initiatives had been undertaken across the region to strengthen mechanisms for the protection of children. The promotion and protection of the rights of children deserved the utmost priority within the framework of international instruments and

in keeping with objectives for national, social and economic advancement.

49. The future of mankind largely depended on the enactment and implementation of policies to safeguard and nurture children. The international community had overwhelmingly supported the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the most powerful human rights instrument in that regard. Furthermore, the special session of the General Assembly and the adoption of its outcome document entitled "A world fit for children" had set out clear goals for the improvement of the situation of children and had provided an impetus for action. In the five intervening years, the increased focus on children had led to some progress in improving the situation of children. The report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the special session (A/62/259) provided an update on progress achieved in meeting the commitments established at the special session. Poverty, hunger, underdevelopment and the inability of many States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals were to a considerable extent linked to structural problems, the unfair and unequal international trading system and a lack of democracy and transparency in the international financial and economic system. Until the international community resolved those structural issues, the developing world would continue to trail behind the developed world in terms of social and economic development, and inevitably the children would suffer the most.

50. The Caribbean Community hoped for an accelerated rate of implementation of the decisions on increased funding for development, as adopted at the G8 meeting in Gleneagles and at the 2005 World Summit. CARICOM also urged developed countries to move positively towards the target of providing 0.7 per cent of gross national product in official development assistance (ODA). While developing countries held ultimate responsibility for their own development, national actions were not enough for them to participate fully in the global economy. Those actions must be complemented by support from the international community. Redressing structural imbalances in the world trading and economic systems was an absolute prerequisite to development. Children would continue to suffer if the processes of globalization and liberalization were not made more inclusive and if benefits were not distributed more equitably.

51. In recent years CARICOM had stressed the need for urgency in tackling the HIV/AIDS problem, which "A world fit for children" had identified as being of paramount importance to the international community. There was no doubt that the pandemic posed a threat of great magnitude to economic and social development worldwide. It was a startling reality that in spite of improvements in child mortality globally, the spread of HIV/AIDS had been reversing the gains accrued in some parts of the world. As small island developing States, CARICOM States were critically aware that HIV/AIDS could destroy the lives of its children and youth, and wished to reiterate the pressing need for more funds and attention to be devoted to the issue at the international level. Notwithstanding, CARICOM countries were well aware that HIV/AIDS must be tackled frontally and Governments in the region should continue to invest as much as possible in combating the pandemic. In an aggressive approach to counteract the effect of HIV/AIDS on children, member States had launched national programmes to reduce the rate of mother-to-child transmission, among other things. Public education programmes had been initiated throughout the region with the aid of UNICEF and through the initiative of several NGOs.

52. The Secretary-General had stressed the critical need to build partnerships and had highlighted the success of various regional partnerships in raising awareness of the rights of children and in improving their condition. CARICOM member States recognized the importance of such partnerships and had collaborated domestically and regionally through the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS.

53. Experts agreed that prevention was the key to minimizing new HIV infections, and CARICOM believed that the best means of combating the effects of HIV/AIDS on children was education, since it represented both an investment and a tool for development.

54. **Mr. Abdelhameed A. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that the final document of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly, entitled "A world fit for children", had compelled Governments to focus on promoting children's rights, a trend strengthened further by the Millennium Declaration.

55. Much action was still needed to create awareness of the objectives of the United Nations study on violence against children, and States must be urged to

incorporate its text and spirit into their national legislation and establish related national plans. With regard to the independent expert's proposal for the appointment of a special representative on violence against children, however, further in-depth study of the idea would be preferable to a hasty decision.

56. With a view to meeting the commitments set out in the final document of the special session and moving with greater certainty towards the realization of the goals set for 2010 and 2015, much effort was needed, which meant stronger national partnerships with the organizations concerned.

57. The Sudan had adopted a framework document on child welfare for the period 2006 to 2015, entitled "A Sudan worthy of children", based on the document "A world fit for children". It reflected the Sudan's commitment to the objectives of the Millennium Declaration and regional and international instruments relating to children, as well as the country's Constitution, under which care of children was considered a religious, moral, national and humanitarian obligation. The document stressed health, educational, social and cultural services, to be assured for every child throughout the country within a framework of effective partnerships with the organizations of civil society.

58. The drafting of the document and all policies relating to children had been overseen by the National Council on Child Welfare, which was placed under the Office of the President of the Republic and provided the planning and supervisory framework for such matters, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Women and Children. Legislative efforts had culminated in the passage, in 2004, of the Uniform Code on Children, a landmark in children's rights legislation.

59. A children's parliament, which had held a successful first session, offered children a forum for expressing their views and concerns and prepared them for decision-making roles, political participation and the practice of democracy in the future.

60. The Sudan had made considerable progress in strengthening the rights of children through productive partnership with United Nations agencies and organizations, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, in the fields of nutrition, health, education and the spreading of a culture of peace. It looked forward to further cooperation in a climate of peace in the south, the east and Darfur, and to taking up the challenges of consolidating that peace and carrying out projects for the rehabilitation of those affected by war, including children. It also looked forward to continued cooperation in the care and rehabilitation of street children and children whose parents were unknown.

61. His delegation expressed its deep concern at the ongoing tragic situation of children under foreign occupation in Palestine and the Syrian Golan and urged the international community to resolve that problem and work for a just and lasting peace and the departure of the occupier.

62. **Mr. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that Sri Lanka had introduced social policies and legislative measures to protect the rights of children. Consistent investment in promoting universal access at all levels of education had resulted in high rates of enrolment and literacy, and Sri Lanka was already on track to meeting the Millennium Development Goals on primary education, gender parity and reproductive health services. Net enrolment rates for both boys and girls at the primary level, the proportion of pupils reaching the fifth grade and the literacy rate for young persons between 15 and 24 years of age were all over 95 per cent.

63. Infant and maternal mortality in Sri Lanka had fallen to low levels that were comparable with those in some developed countries. The system of free education and public health care had brought considerable progress in social development.

64. However, the improvement in the lives of children had been undermined by their forced recruitment by a terrorist group which had been banned by Member States. In that context, his delegation appreciated the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and of UNICEF to protect the children of Sri Lanka from recruitment. His Government continued to work closely with the Office of the Special Representative and the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

65. In keeping with its commitment to a zero tolerance policy on child recruitment, the Government of Sri Lanka was doing its utmost to curb the practice, in accordance with the recommendations of the Working Group, and was fully committed to the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child

combatants. A committee had been established to initiate inquiries and to monitor investigations into the abduction of children. Within its mandate, the committee would make recommendations to ensure that those children had access to protection, rehabilitation and reintegration facilities. The committee would also propose training for the members of the security forces in order to familiarize them with Sri Lanka's international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

66. Terrorist groups operating in Sri Lanka had continued to recruit children and had not taken steps to release child recruits in spite of promises to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Sri Lanka had a strict legal framework for the protection of children against forced recruitment; however, terrorist groups functioned outside that framework, in blatant disregard for national and international norms. The forced recruitment of child soldiers undermined the efforts of the Government to secure their welfare. The main challenge, therefore, was to ensure that all children of Sri Lanka were protected from predation. He urged the international community to launch a process against the recruitment of children and to assist countries such as Sri Lanka in rehabilitating and reintegrating former recruits. The process of reintegration required that the Government should ensure a protective environment in which successful family reunification, access to health services, education, vocational training, income-generating activities and psychological care were provided for, with due consideration given to raising the standard of living of populations affected by armed conflict.

67. **Ms. Kurosaki** (Japan) said that child abuse was considered one of the most serious human rights violations and that recognition of the importance of children's rights was rapidly growing in Japan. Laws on the prevention of child abuse and on child welfare had been enacted to introduce a system that ensured safe conditions for child care. The concept of security was based on the belief that every person was entitled to a healthy, dignified and fulfilling life.

68. Pursuant to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in cooperation with other Member States and international organizations, Japan had provided $2.2 million to a project in Bhutan on literacy, income security and employment for vulnerable persons, including women and children, which was being implemented by various United Nations funds and programmes. In that context, she expressed Japan's appreciation for the leading role played by UNICEF in following up the Secretary-General's study on violence against children.

69. Japan was greatly concerned about the situation of children in countries affected by armed conflict. Although progress had been made in recent years in combating impunity, through the application of international standards for the protection of children, much remained to be done. She commended the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, particularly with respect to the preparation of reports based on field visits. Japan was keenly aware that children caught in armed conflict suffered severe psychological, economic and social problems, and were often deprived of the right to proper education, health care, water and food. Japan strongly believed that the issue of children and armed conflict should be a priority for the international community and should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. For its part, Japan intended to pursue its close cooperation with other Member States, UNICEF and other actors, including NGOs. Japan would do its utmost to create a better future for children, and looked forward to its participation in the high-level meeting scheduled for December 2007. That forum would provide a fitting opportunity to review the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action, adopted at the twenty-seventh special session, and to renew the commitment of the international community to achieving a world fit for children.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.